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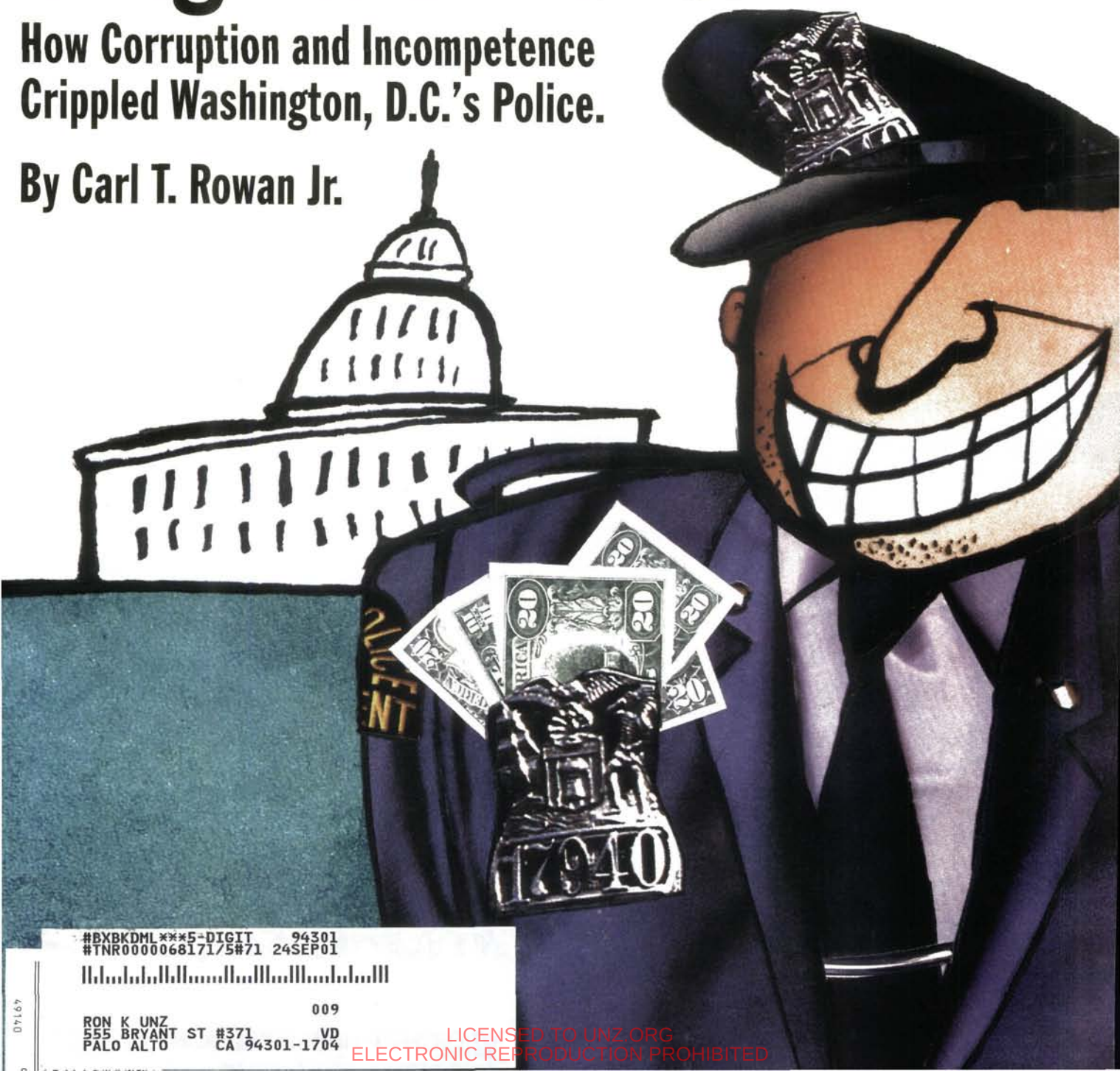

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Where We Stand

A commentary on public education and other critical issues

The Childswap Society

By SANDRA FELDMAN, President
American Federation of Teachers

Many years ago, when I was a teenager, I read a science fiction story that I've never been able to forget. It came back to me with special force this holiday season because I was thinking about this country's national shame—a child poverty rate of 25 percent—and about our lack of urgency in dealing with the problems this poverty creates.

The story described a society with a national child lottery which was held every four years. Every child's name was put into it—there were no exceptions—and children were randomly redistributed to new parents, who raised them for the next four years.

Babies were not part of this lottery. Parents got to keep their newborn children until the next lottery, but then they became part of the national childswap. The cycle was broken every third swap and kids were sent back to their original parents until the next lottery. So by the time you were considered an adult, at age 26, the most time you could have spent with your birth parents was 10 years. The other 16 were simply a matter of chance.

The Luck of the Draw

Maybe one of your new parents would be the head of a gigantic multinational company and the most powerful person in the country or the president of a famous university. Or you might find yourself the child of a family living in a public housing project or migrant labor camp.

The whole idea sounded horrible to me, but people in the childswap society took the lottery for granted. They didn't try to hide their children or send them away to other countries; childswapping was simply part of their culture. And one thing the lottery did was to make the whole society very conscientious about how things were arranged for kids. After all, you never knew where your own child would end up after the next lottery, so in a very real sense everyone's child was—or could be—yours. As a result, children growing up under this system got everything they needed to thrive, both physically and intellectually, and the society itself was harmonious.

What if someone wrote a story about what American society in the late 20th century takes for granted in the arrangements for its children? We might not want to admit it, but don't we take for granted that some kids are going to have much better lives than others? Of course. We take for granted that some will get the best medical treatment and others will be able to get little or none. We take for granted that some kids will go to beautiful, well-cared-for schools with top-notch curriculums, excellent libraries, and computers for every child and others will go to schools where there are not enough desks and textbooks to go around—wretched places where even the toilets don't work.

Don't we take for granted that some kids will have much better lives than others?

We take for granted that teachers in wealthy suburban schools will be better paid and better trained than those in poor inner-city or rural schools. We take for granted, in so many ways, that the children whom the lottery of birth has made the most needy will get the least. "After all," we say to ourselves, "it's up to each family to look after its own. If some parents can't give their children what they need to thrive, that's *their* problem."

What Would Happen?

Obviously I'm not suggesting that the United States adopt a childswap system. The idea makes me cringe, and, anyway, it's just a fable. But I like to imagine what would happen if we did.

We'd start with political figures and their children and grandchildren, with governors and mayors and other leaders. What do you suppose would happen when they saw that their children would have the same chance as the sons and daughters of poor people—no more and no less? What would happen to our schools and health-care system—and our shameful national indifference to children who are not ours?

I bet we'd quickly find a way to set things straight and make sure *all* children had an equal chance to thrive. ■

Where We Stand **is published once every month in *The New Republic*. To comment, write to Sandra Feldman, AFT, 555 New Jersey Ave. N.W., Washington, DC 20001.** **© Sandra Feldman 1998.** **Visit our web site (http://www.aft.org).**

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CORRESPONDENCE

Smart Alec

To the editors:

Interesting to see how revenge-of-the-nerd type journalists never tire of the lame school of writing that, quite frankly, we thought magazines such as yours had exhausted every paragraph of in covering celebrity activism.

For the record, Stephen Glass's article, "The Boys on the Bus" (December 8, 1997), is filled with more distortion and petty "gotcha" sniping than any we've seen in a long time. Moreover, Glass's assertion that either The Creative Coalition or I do not have a significant grasp of the facts of the issue is most odd. TCC is the recent recipient of a Schumann Foundation grant for $50,000 for our work in campaign finance reform. No one at Schumann asked us for our autographs.

ALEC BALDWIN
New York, New York

To the editors:

Stephen Glass's hit job on Alec Baldwin was, like Baldwin himself, somewhat lacking in substance and sense. Regarding the Brookhaven National Laboratory, Glass fell for a whitewash. A tritium leak that went undetected for about twelve years prompted the Department of Energy to investigate. Last May, Energy Secretary Fredrico Peña summarily terminated the contract of Associated Universities, Inc., the facility's management contractor. This was an unprecedented action within the DOE contracting universe. The groundwater contamination has the surrounding community up in arms.

GEORGE STUBBS
Melrose, Massachusetts

To the editors:

As the executive director of The Creative Coalition, I was greatly disappointed to read Stephen Glass's inaccuracy-drenched story. Glass writes of "the few of us who [had] gathered" and of the one chartered bus with "fewer than 100 people on board." In reality, 230 people from TCC and organizations such as Sierra Club, NYPIRG, Common Cause, and Citizen Action gathered on four buses, successfully collecting 8,000 signatures.

Glass: "9:30 a.m.: The ratio of autographs to petition signatures is about 25 to 1."

Reality: We didn't even arrive at the orientation center until 9:30 a.m. and didn't set out to collect signatures until 11:30 a.m. With 8,000 signatures collected that day, Glass's ratio would imply that Alec Baldwin might have given out some 200,000 autographs.

Glass notes that "almost half of [the volunteers] seem under the voting age of 18." Participation in the trip was restricted to people of voting age. Perhaps in order to manufacture his point, the writer sought out community kids who had come to the center.

Finally, none of us made references to either the Million Man March or the Freedom Rides.

SHARON O'CONNELL
New York, New York

Stephen Glass replies:

In an effort to disprove my story, Sharon O'Connell accuses me of sloppy reporting. After checking my notes again with others on the trip, I find that all of the details are accurate. First, my story

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Stephen Glass Rides the Baldwin Campaign Bus
Margaret Talbot Debunks the Clintons' Tinseltown Guru

makes it clear that "fewer than 100" people were on board the one bus Alec Baldwin was riding. That is accurate; the story made no reference to how many people were on all of TCC's buses combined. Second, we arrived at the cultural center shortly before 9:30 a.m. where, thanks to mobs of fans, Alec had one of his most efficient autograph-signing periods. Third, I know that TCC staffers did make the comments about the Million Man March and Freedom Rides. Not only did I hear them, but so did a bystander, who was insulted and complained about the comments several times. As for O'Connell's disputing my 25-to-1 autograph-to-petition-signature ratio, my story actually compares the number of autographs Alec gave away to the number of signatures Alec collected. In comparing the number of autographs Alec gave away to the number of signatures *everyone* on the trip collected, O'Connell compares apples to oranges.

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Naming names

To the editors:
Your Notebook item of December 1, 1997 ("Earthslinging"), misquoted me when it aligned me with the "radical" environmental group Earth First! I never said we were representing Earth First! and, as *The San Francisco Chronicle* clarified, we were simply a group of concerned citizens standing in solidarity with the nonviolent protesters who were pepper-sprayed. As I told your reporter, we weren't representing Earth First! "although we do believe the Earth should come first."

Perhaps we should form another group called Earth Second. Maybe in our radical capitalist society it would go over better.

SIG-BRITT COX
Marin County, California

The editors reply:
We stand by the accuracy of the item as reported.

Impartial troops

To the editors:
Andrew Bacevich and Richard Kohn are right that the officer corps of the armed forces in a democracy should be nonpartisan ("Grand Army of the Republicans," December 8, 1997), but the fact is that hostility to the armed forces among a large segment of politicians and academics is making it more difficult to recruit officer candidates. I personally experienced the dissolution of the Naval ROTC program at Columbia during the 1960s due to anti–Vietnam War animosity. Furthermore, only two of the eight Ivy League schools that had NROTC programs in the 1960s still have them. MIT's program is currently under review, as are ROTC programs at other universities.

If academics and students of the military are worried that the U.S. officer corps is becoming overwhelmingly conservative Republican, perhaps they should stand up to the hostile campus military-recruiting atmosphere at northern liberal schools.

CHRISTOPHER P. MORIARTY
Westfield, New Jersey

To the editors:
I have taught at the Naval War College for over a decade. While many officers may not be thrilled with the current commander-in-chief, they will execute the policies of his administration with the same alacrity as their predecessors did the policies of the Reagan and Bush administrations. Can Bacevich and Kohn offer any evidence to the contrary?

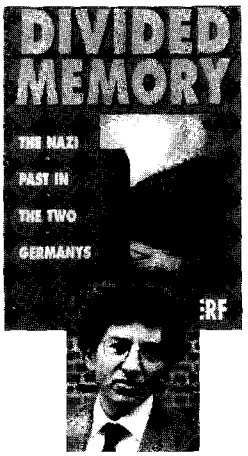
MACKUBIN THOMAS OWENS
Newport, Rhode Island

DIVIDED MEMORY

THE NAZI PAST IN THE TWO GERMANYS

JEFFREY HERF

COWINNER OF THE FRAENKEL PRIZE IN CONTEMPORARY HISTORY



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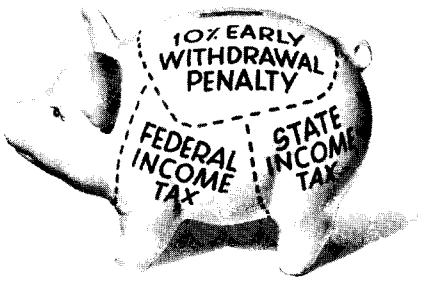

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FROM WASHINGTON

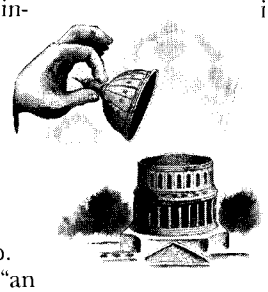
No problem

Now that Republicans have put President Clinton on the defensive over the Internal Revenue Service, congressional Republicans are hoping to achieve a general rollback of progressive taxation. At his lengthy December 16 press conference, Clinton gave a sample of his probable defense, declaring that any attempt to "simplify" the tax code would have to be fair and equitable. Apparently, the Republicans see this fallback as evidence that the president can be rolled on this issue, too. So, in order to soften up opposition to their schemes for a flat tax or national sales tax, conservatives are stepping up attacks on the empirical basis of Democratic economics: namely, the assertion that income inequality has been rising despite years of robust growth.

In recent months, columnist George F. Will, neoconservative éminence grise Irving Kristol, and Christopher DeMuth, the president of the American Enterprise Institute, have all ridiculed the notion that inequality is an important phenomenon, or, in some cases, that it even exists. "People who deny that equality is increasing," Will wrote in the August 21 *Washington Post*, "are fixated on the recent small increase in income inequality." In *The Wall Street Journal*, Kristol wrote that "In all of our major cities, there is not a single restaurant where a CEO can lunch or dine with the absolute assurance that he will not run into his secretary."

This is actually a departure of sorts from conservative tradition. Until a few years ago, conservatives did not attempt to deny inequality—they praised it. Several years ago, for instance, the libertarian Ernest van den Haag wrote an essay in *The Wall Street Journal* declaring that the gap between rich and poor is a good thing; it spurs the have-nots to get, and therefore produce, more. This is a perfectly logical position, and does, in fact, describe the way capitalism's incentive structure has to work. Of course, it is also true that *too great* a gap between rich and poor would cause a capitalist economy to lose efficiency, because only a handful of plutocrats would be able to afford anything the system produced.

And the balance between efficiency and equality seems much worse than the conservatives suggest. According to a new study published by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, "Pulling Apart: A State-by-State Analysis of Income Trends," the average incomes of families with children in the bottom 20 percent of the U.S. income distribution went from $11,759 in 1978–80 to $9,254 in 1994–96. The top fifth, by contrast, went from $94,158 to $116,200. The study may underestimate the incomes of the poor, who often make a significant amount of money in the tax-free underground economy. But it probably also underestimates the true incomes of the top 20 percent of families. For one thing, the Census Bureau does not include income from capital gains in defining family income. Furthermore, the census data do not reflect earnings above $100,000 for any single job. According to the study, "an executive with a salary of $350,000 is therefore counted as having earnings of $100,000–$250,000 less than his or her true income from that job."



DeMuth's response to evidence like this has been to redefine the terms of debate. Writing in the October 1997 *Commentary*, for example, he cites Charles Murray and the late Richard J. Herrnstein's *The Bell Curve*, which claimed that American society is starkly stratified according to the largely inherited attribute of IQ, and that a cognitive elite will soon be running the U.S. The members of this wealthy, knowledge-based class can easily obtain medical and retirement services on their own, without government assistance, DeMuth says. And since "most people who inhabit the vast middle range of the bell curve" possess a widely distributed intelligence, DeMuth argues, most Americans will have no problem pursuing a variety of occupations. If there has been any increase in income inequality, writes DeMuth, "it is a very small tick in the massive and unprecedented leveling of material circumstances that has been proceeding now for almost three centuries and in this century has accelerated dramatically."

But at least in this century, the social progress DeMuth marvels at was boosted by government support for technology and education. Indeed, what DeMuth overlooks is that the opportunity to use the human capital that, in his words, "blossomed with the advent of universal education," was, of course, a product of big government spending on schools and universities. Most troubling, DeMuth's reliance on the *The Bell Curve* implies that the people left behind—those who don't fall into the middle or upper range—are basically dispensable, since they don't possess the requisite intelligence to prosper in the new economy.

Kristol takes a somewhat different tack, one reminiscent of Anatole France's gibe that in France "the law in its majestic equality allows rich and poor to sleep under the bridges of Paris." Initially, Kristol maintains that income inequality is a bogus term, one cooked up by professors who "hasten to their computers to analyze these statistics in minute detail—to a degree where only a mathematician can make sense of what they report about income inequality." But even if income inequality were really rising, Kristol says, it wouldn't matter because it is being swamped by social equality: "Only experts can deduce a person's economic status from his clothing; who doesn't wear blue jeans these days?"

It is true, as observers from Tocqueville to Lord Bryce have noted, that social equality is a source of dynamism in our economy—and of satisfaction for our citizens. But the downscaling of the elite's clothing and manners merely shows that the upper classes are now so rich that they can dress in a slovenly fashion and still command respectability.

Denying income inequality in this way is not merely bad for lower-income Americans—it also threatens the economic gains that the U.S. has made recently, many of which depended on Clinton's eschewal of traditional big-spending Democratic programs and his championing of free trade. Already the left is citing conservative indifference to inequality as another argument against free trade. Quoting Jeff Faux and William Greider, Lars-Erik Nelson complains in the December 19 *New York Daily News* that income inequality has worsened because of the export of jobs overseas. But income inequality has more to do with tax and welfare policies than it does with workers in underdeveloped countries competing for jobs. Indulging in fantasies about CEOs bumping into their secretaries in swank restaurants may be emotionally satisfying for conservatives, but it only confirms their obliviousness to everyday realities. In their relentless pursuit of further tax breaks for the rich, the Republicans could end up destroying the very prosperity they purport to seek.

JACOB HEILBRUNN

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

JANUARY 19, 1998

GENDER MENDING

Few people took Secretary of Defense William Cohen seriously when he responded to a wave of military sexual harassment scandals last June by appointing a commission to look into the problem. But the panel, led by former Senator Nancy Kassebaum Baker, has surprised everyone by producing that rarest of Washington documents: a committee report that actually says something. After visits to 16 military bases and meetings with hundreds of recruits and trainers, the panel recommended that the Army, Navy, and Air Force abandon much of their current policy of gender-integrated training.

Precisely because it was so unambiguous, the report was an easy target for critics. Labeling the panel's proposal "The New Military Segregation," *The New York Times* harrumphed that it was "a step backward for sexual equality in a military culture that should be pushed harder to make integration work." Separation, the paper said, "would send the inescapable message that the military cannot effectively accommodate women or control sexual misconduct." The *Times*' "step backward" line was echoed—almost verbatim—by a host of others, including the National Organization for Women, Senator Olympia Snowe of Maine, and Sara Lister, the former assistant secretary of the Army, who recently resigned in a flap over her labeling of the traditionalist Marine Corps as "extremist."

But is the problem here really the refusal of the "military culture" to accommodate women? Or is it the refusal of the most strident gender-equity advocates to accommodate common sense and empirical reality? To begin with, the critics are exaggerating the radicalism of the report's recommendations. The panel merely suggested that the other services adopt a policy similar to the one already in place in the Marine Corps: separate training and barracks for men and women during their first nine months of basic training—that formative, sensitive period during which young recruits are being stripped of their civilian ways and molded into warriors. This would be followed by gender-integrated training, and, still, separate barracks during advanced training—the period when recruits learn their various technical specialties. There would be no changes in officer training.

Furthermore, the plain facts show that the costs of gender-integrated basic training and living arrangements have begun to outweigh the benefits. The Kassebaum Baker panel members were stunned by data demonstrating a "high frequency" of sexual relations between male and female recruits around the country. At Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri, they discovered morale shredded by intraunit sexual dalliances so common that drill instructors actually removed barrack-room doors so that they could spy on their troops' bunks at night. The *Times* huffed that such problems could be alleviated if not for "incompetent trainers" but offered no alternative that could work in the real world. Actually, short of imposing a chilling and unrealistic "no touch, no talk" policy, there is little even the most competent trainer could do to keep male and female trainees from striking up the kind of personal relationships that, while perfectly natural and appropriate in civilian life, have no place in a military unit where mission-oriented group cohesion, not romantic pairing, is what matters most.

Kassebaum Baker's proposals could even aid the integration of women into the military by giving both women and men a chance to acclimate themselves to military life in a climate free of sexual tension. Then, they could move on more confidently to advanced training, where units would be gender-integrated. It works in the Marine Corps, where women recruits report high levels of satisfaction with their accomplishments in a basic training regimen that is demanding—even grueling—but nevertheless geared to the different physical needs and capabilities of women.

But it is precisely those differences that the critics seem determined to deny. The very vocabulary with which they attacked the Kassebaum Baker panel—"a step backwards," "new segregation"—suggests a false congruence between integration of the races and integration of the genders. Segregation of the races under Jim Crow was always an affront to human dignity and was intended to be that way. There was no good reason for separate public restrooms in the South except to humiliate blacks. Gender segregation, by contrast, may

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actually enhance human dignity to the degree it bears a rational relation to compelling government interests—such as military-unit cohesion—and to objective, ineradicable physical differences between men and women. There would be no good reason for men and women to share bathrooms, for example, except perhaps to humiliate both.

Having wisely appointed such a sensible panel, Secretary Cohen now appears uncertain what to do with its controversial recommendation. Let the Army, Navy, and Air Force ponder the matter first, he has said. This is a mistake. The decision how best to deploy men and women is only partially a matter of military expertise. At its core, this is a matter of national policy—a political question with which unelected officers are ill-equipped to grapple, and to which they are likely to supply only the safest of bureaucratic answers. Cohen himself should step forward, exercise civilian control of the armed forces, and order the Army, Navy, and Air Force to adopt the Kassebaum Baker panel's recommendations. He could even order them to do it with all deliberate speed. •

NOTEBOOK

STUFFING ENVELOPES: Even as the National Archives was releasing more Nixon tapes, exposing more of the inner workings of the White House that brought you such political tricks as made-to-order letters-to-the-editor campaigns against disfavored reporters, it seems that the nation's record repository was also *emulating* this element of the Trickster's repertoire. Unhappy with Roger Rosenblatt's irreverent take on presidential libraries in these pages ("Underbooked," December 1, 1997), officials at the Archives, which oversees the libraries, tried to concoct a groundswell against it. "We believe it would be very effective if you considered asking one of your major users to write the editor of THE NEW REPUBLIC and offer his or her positive feelings on the presidential libraries," read a memo that was distributed within the Archives and then anonymously forwarded to TNR. When we called Jerry George, acting director of policy and communications for the National Archives, he took the modified limited hangout route. "If we did something wrong, I don't know what it is," he said. "The people in the presidential libraries found the [Rosenblatt] piece to be neither accurate nor fair. They asked some people who understand the presidential libraries and their usefulness to respond." And not only that. According to an email written by George—which the anonymous gremlin also sent us—George thought the letter-writing campaign would help in similar situations in the future when the Archives might need "to know to whom we can turn." Not to too many people, it seems. Three letters about Rosenblatt's piece have flooded in so far, one of them from Archivist of the United States John Carlin himself.

HAPPY HOMEOWNER: Beset by corruption scandals, Yasir Arafat has announced that he will change the personnel in his proto-government. But the brouhaha in the Palestinian polity over financial malfeasance in Arafat's regime may actually be less about the disappearance of funds than about the negotiations with Israel. The fact is that, even in comparison to most of his Fatah comrades, Arafat is a moderate in his expectations of possible final arrangements with the Jews. This is a lonely position in emergent Palestine. From the Palestinian point of view, however, it is also an indispensable one if the United States is to be kept involved as a broker to Jerusalem. So there is much pent-up resentment toward Arafat among his own followers (to say nothing of the Muslim extremists), and it often takes the form of criticizing him for his anti-democratic ways and his looseness with the people's money. But these are not simply Arafat's personal habits; they are the routines of Arab politics. (Thus, governance on the West Bank and Gaza would not be much different if even a darling of the West like Arafat's critic Hanan Ashrawi were suddenly to take his place.) Still, Arafat has bowed to his legislative council's demand that he shake up his cabinet, which, an auditor's report charged, somehow misplaced nearly half of the cash in last year's budget. It is still not clear what kind of changes he will ultimately make. But his promise has apparently managed to divert attention from the scandal of Arafat's own lavish lifestyle. No, he does not have 80 palaces like his buddy Saddam Hussein. But the leader of the impoverished Palestinians, who appeals to the world ceaselessly with moral arguments about the wretched of the earth, is the proud owner of a mansion in Gaza, a mansion in Hebron, a mansion in Jericho, a mansion in Ramallah, and a mansion in Nablus. This is plain moral grossness. It takes about half an hour to get from one of these villas to another. No wonder he is furious that the Israelis aren't returning more land. When he sees land, he sees property.

HIT MAN HIT: Remember Eddy Arbrouet? He's the Haitian thug who was wanted in connection with the murder of government opponents on that unhappy Caribbean isle. (See "Island of Disenchantment," by Charles Lane, September 29, 1997.) Well, Eddy Arbrouet is no more; he was shot dead by Haitian National Police, who raided his hideout on December 15. Oddly, the Haitians carried out this bloody "arrest" without the participation of a U.S.-funded investigative unit that had been specifically assigned to capture Arbrouet alive and interrogate him. Now, of course, Eddy will never tell what he knows about those killings—or the complicity in them of top officials of the Haitian government. No doubt that is the outcome certain people in Haiti were hoping for. But it shouldn't be tolerated by the Clinton administration, which is the last external prop for Haiti's government now that the United Nations has left the island. If the Haitians won't investigate Arbrouet's death, Congress should. •

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A Message from Negative Population Growth, Inc.

Why the U.S. Needs a Smaller Population

And How We Can Achieve It

The U.S. needs a smaller population in order to halt the destruction of its environment and to create an economy that will be sustainable over the very long term.

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2. **Lower our fertility rate** (the average number of children per woman) from the present 2.1 to around 1.5 and maintain it at that level for several decades. We believe that non-coercive financial incentives will be necessary to reach that goal.

If most women had no more than two children, our fertility rate would drop to around 1.5, because many women remain childless by choice, or choose to have only one child. **NPG promotes the ideal of the two-child maximum family as the social norm, because that is the key to lowering our fertility.**

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- Give an annual cash grant to parents who pay little or no income tax, and who have no more than two children. Those with three or more children would lose the cash grant entirely.

The Choice Before Us

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Without such a program, we are almost certain to continue our mindless, headlong rush toward catastrophic population levels that will devastate our environment and produce widespread poverty in a crowded, polluted nation.

If you agree that we need to work toward a smaller U.S. population, we need your support. **NPG is the only organization that calls for smaller U.S. and world population, and for specific, realistic measures to achieve those goals.**

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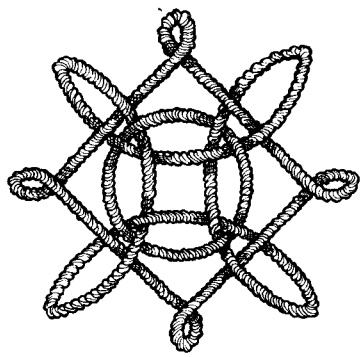
THE HARD QUESTIONS

BRANDED

By Michael J. Sandel

It is getting hard to tell the difference between companies and countries. Last month, Earthwatch Inc. of Longmont, Colorado, launched the world's first commercial spy satellite into space. Now, anyone with a few hundred dollars can buy surveillance photos of missile sites in the Middle East or the swimming pool in a celebrity's backyard. Once the prerogative of governments, spying from space has become a commercial enterprise.

Even where countries retain their functions, governance and marketing are increasingly entangled. For decades, candidates for office have sold themselves like breakfast cereal. Today, entire countries do. Consider the "rebranding" of Britain. A few months ago, Prime Minister Tony Blair's advisers recommended that he update the country's image. It was time to "rebrand" Britain as "one of the world's pioneers rather than one of its museums." Red telephone booths are being replaced by transparent glass ones. The box-like London taxicab is getting a sleeker, aerodynamic design. "Rule Britannia!" is giving way to "Cool Britannia," the new slogan of the British Transit Authority, whose logo is now a jaunty Union Jack tinged with yellow and green for vibrancy. "The image of Britain," Blair explained, "which used to be bowler hats and pinstripe trousers and very old-fashioned and very stuffy, has been replaced by something far more dynamic and open and forward-looking.... I'm proud of my country's past, but I don't want to live in it."



The "rebranding" of Britain is not an isolated episode but a sign of the times. It reflects a new image-savvy, commercialized approach to government that threatens to turn national identities into brand names, anthems into advertising jingles, flags into corporate logos.

Last year, the U.S. Postal Service issued a stamp of Bugs Bunny. Critics complained that stamps should honor historic figures, not commercial products. But the post office, facing stiff competition from email, fax machines, and Federal Express, sees licensing rights as key to its future. Every Bugs Bunny stamp that is saved rather than mailed contributes 32 cents to post office profits. And stamp collecting is the least of it. The licensing deal with Warner Bros. enables the Postal Service to market Looney Tunes ties, hats, videos, and other products at more than 500 postal stores nationwide.

Also for sale is a new product line called Postmark America that seeks to capitalize on the brand name of the Postal Service itself. Products include a $12.95 Pony Express youth cap, infantwear emblazoned with the logo "Just Delivered," and an airmail pilot's leather jacket—which sells for $345. A Postal Service executive explained that the retailing effort is modeled after companies like Warner Bros. and Walt Disney: "They've turned their icons into product lines. That's what we're trying to do. We're trying to key off our stamps and our stamp image."

Sometimes, however, the attempt to turn national symbols into brand names meets with resistance. In 1995, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police sold Disney the right to market the Mountie image worldwide. Disney paid Canada's federal police $2.5 million per year in marketing rights plus a share of the licensing fees for Mountie T-shirts, coffee mugs, teddy bears, maple syrup, diaper bags, and other merchandise. Many Canadians protested that the Mounties were selling out a sacred national symbol to a U.S. corporate giant. "It's not the price that rankles. It's the sale," complained an editorial in the Toronto-based *Globe and Mail*. "The Mounted Police have miscalculated on a crucial point. Pride."

Canada has learned to live with the marketing of the Mounties, but the critics had a point: there is reason to worry about an excessive commingling of governance and commerce. At a time when politics and government are widely disliked, public officials will inevitably seek to tap the appeal of popular culture, advertising, and entertainment. The problem is not that this borrowed authority fails, but that it succeeds too completely. According to polls, the two most popular agencies of the U.S. government are the post office and the military. Not coincidentally, perhaps, both advertise heavily on television. In a media-saturated world, citizens' judgments about government increasingly depend on the image it projects.

Not only is this unfair to government programs that lack advertising budgets (who ever saw a commercial for welfare?); it distorts the priorities of agencies that lavish money on their public image. After a time, their mission becomes indistinguishable from their marketing. Once the post office sold stamps and delivered the mail; today it sells stamp-related images and licensed apparel. Postmaster General Marvin Runyon articulated well the theory behind the new commercialized style of governance: "We have to be market-driven and customer-friendly, and make products that people want."

But citizens are not customers, and democracy is not simply a matter of giving people what they want. Self-government, properly practiced, leads people to reflect on their wants and to revise them in the light of com-

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peting considerations. Unlike customers, citizens sometimes sacrifice their wants for the sake of the common good. This is the difference between politics and commerce, between patriotism and brand loyalty.

When government leans too heavily on the borrowed appeal of cartoon characters and cutting-edge ads, it may boost its approval ratings but squander the dignity and authority of the public realm. And without a public realm in good repair, democratic citizens have little hope of directing the market forces and commercial pressures that quicken by the day and shape our lives in untold ways.

Margaret Thatcher, no friend of the rebranding of Britain, inadvertently contributed to this phenomenon when, as prime minister, she privatized the national airline. At a recent Conservative Party conference, she came upon a British Airways booth and was dismayed to find that the tail fin of the model plane on display no longer bore the Union Jack, but a multicultural motif designed to represent British Airways' new global identity. Drawing a tissue from her handbag, she covered the tail fin in protest. As Lady Thatcher should have known, markets, for all their glories, exact a price in honor and pride. •

JOHANNESBURG DISPATCH

PARTING SHOT

By Richard Stengel

When white South Africans first heard excerpts from Nelson Mandela's five-hour valedictory address to the African National Congress in the town of Mafikeng on December 16, 1997, many of them felt betrayed, wondering to themselves, "Could this be our beloved 'Madiba,' our smiling symbol of racial harmony in the rainbow nation?" In the marathon speech, Mandela chastised whites for clinging to apartheid privileges, blasted the "white-dominated" media, and spoke of a white "counter-revolutionary network" bent on undermining South African democracy.

Nelson Mandela has always had two faces. There is the kindly and now familiar father figure in beautiful print shirts who kisses children and talks about letting bygones be bygones. And then, to whites' occasional dismay, there is the stone-faced ex-political prisoner who harangues them about conspiracies and residual racism. Black South Africans have perceived this dichotomy, only they see it in reverse: many wonder why Mandela spends so much time placating whites and so little empowering blacks. Some in the ANC believe that, as Cheryl Carolus, the party's acting secretary-general, puts it, "whites are not bringing enough to the table."

It is a tribute to Mandela's media savvy that he could overcome white skepticism to make himself a revered, even cuddly, figure in the wealthy, still-mostly-white suburbs. After all, it wasn't much more than a decade ago that many white South Africans still saw him as a terrorist and confirmed communist. But Mandela worked hard to overcome that image, to the point where most whites here practice a kind of benign denial: when he says something they don't like, they just assume he doesn't really mean it. His embrace of Muammar Qaddafi? Whites just chalk it up to an old man's idiosyncrasies.

Or at least they used to. In his Mafikeng speech, Mandela was essentially telling the white community, "I will no longer be your grinning lawn jockey of racial harmony. If you want me as your mascot, you must do more than wear Madiba T-shirts and hire the token black face." Mandela's speech crystallized the relationship between the twin themes that have dominated the post-apartheid debate: reconciliation and transformation. Reconciliation essentially means making the country safe for whites; transformation is a code word for the redistribution of wealth from the white minority to the black majority.

Whites have always been less concerned about the former than the latter. The comforting illusion for so many white South Africans has been that the achievement of political equality somehow canceled out economic inequality. Just a couple of weeks ago, in the ritzy Jo-burg suburb of Sandton, a group of wealthy white residents decided to boycott their rates payments—property taxes paid to the local government—because they deemed the redistribution of municipal resources to the local black township "socialist." A decline in white lifestyle here is represented by someone trading in his BMW for an Infiniti—a switch done primarily because the ubiquitous Jo-burg carjackers are partial to luxury German cars. Meanwhile, walls grow higher, alarm systems more elaborate, security guards more prevalent. Few whites seem willing to accept Mandela's formula—no reconciliation without transformation—and that is the challenge that Mandela's designated successor, Thabo Mbeki, will face—first as ANC president and then, after elections in 1999, as president of the entire country.

One would have thought that, in Mandela's final words to the ANC faithful, he might have offered an emotional farewell to the organization he loved more than any woman. But, in fact, his speech revealed his devotion precisely because he did not make any such statement. For, in performing his last official act as head of the organization that molded him, Mandela delivered the very speech that Mbeki, his heir apparent, wanted him to give. Eschewing his more familiar role as grandfather of the nation, Mandela dutifully became the bad cop of transformation so that Mbeki—who has been identified with a more Africanist, anti-white line—could be the good cop of reconciliation. So while Mandela rebuked private charitable and human-rights organizations for being power-

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hungry, and newspapers for being unpatriotic, Mbeki preached against drunk driving ("Arrive Alive! Don't Drink and Drive!" he proclaimed), described the wonders of the marketplace, and tried to borrow a little charisma from his mentor.

He'll need it. Mandela is a macro-politician who speaks in grand themes; Mbeki is a technocrat who, when asked a general question about the economy, will tell you about what farmers in the Transkei are planting this spring. Mbeki's strength has been as the ANC's Machiavelli, a back-room operator who executed deft power plays to move aside such able rivals as former ANC Secretary General Cyril Ramaphosa and Tokyo Sexwale, the former premier of Gauteng province.

But how Mbeki manages the ANC's public image will prove as crucial as how he operates behind the scenes. Mandela's speech gave conservative journalists an occasion to roll out the wolf-in-sheep's clothing argument about the ANC. Mandela himself hasn't been shy about what it will take to carry on the business of transformation. Mandela is a democrat, but he's not a fanatic about it. His view is that South Africa's primary need is transformation, and, in that context, that multiparty democracy is more a luxury than a necessity.

Mandela always has the grand design in mind—and that design is the pre-eminence of the ANC. He sees the ANC as expanding to contain other parties; it can be all things to all people. This view was in evidence, when, just before the ANC conference, Mandela made a most extraordinary proposal: a merger between the ANC and Mangosuthu Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party, the KwaZulu/Natal-based Zulu organization with which the ANC has been fighting a bloody civil war for years.

But Mandela remembers when young Buthelezi was a card-carrying member of the ANC Youth League and Inkatha was an ANC-aligned cultural organization. Mandela added that he could even see Buthelezi as a deputy president. Mandela is a practitioner of the old dictum of political hardball: keep your friends close, but keep your enemies even closer. Mandela knows that if he lures Buthelezi into the ANC's kraal, all of the Inkatha Freedom Party—and all of Natal—will come with him.

This is not the kind of politics Mandela's heir is given to. At the end of the conference, Mandela passed a carved chief's stick to Mbeki, saying that it was made of a hardwood that would not wear out. With the stick he also offered some equally firm advice: do not surround yourself with yes men. Mbeki tends to see all criticism as a mean-spirited attack. The ANC rank-and-file know this, and, as a rebuke, voted many of Mbeki's erstwhile rivals onto the party's executive committee. Mandela doesn't like criticism either, but he knows a leader must grin and bear it. Mbeki will never be able to fill Mandela's shoes. ("Anyway, they're far too ugly for me to wear," Mbeki said to much laughter at the conference.) But he needs to follow the old man's advice.

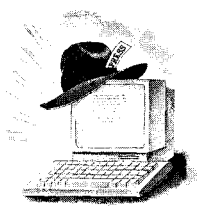
RICHARD STENGEL, a senior editor at *Time*, collaborated with Nelson Mandela on his memoirs, *Long Walk to Freedom*.

TEHRAN DISPATCH

MULLAH MELEE

By Carroll R. Bogert

Ibrahim Yazdi had a feeling he might be arrested. The leader of Iran's Freedom Party, a token opposition group, Yazdi had signed a daring open letter to the regime in late November. The letter demanded protection for dissidents such as the Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri, whose home in the holy city of Qom had just been attacked by a mob of radical Islamists. Yazdi, an affable, American-trained pharmacist, reckoned the hardliners wouldn't touch him until after the Organization of the Islamic Conference concluded its meeting in Tehran in mid-December, and he was right. He was arrested three days after the meeting.



Chief Justice Ayatollah Mohammed Yazdi (no relation, and no friend) hinted that the open letter represented a "well-planned plot" against Islam. Then, just as abruptly, Yazdi was released from prison on Christmas Day—again, as he'd more or less foreseen. The conservatives still "have the power," he told me when we met in early November. "But they cannot exercise it."

Indeed, the May 1997 election of President Mohammed Khatami with 70 percent of the popular vote has certified public resentment in a way the mullahs can no longer ignore but appear determined to resist. Khatami has declared his "respect to the great people of the United States," and even suggested that he might speak to Americans directly in a televised address. But, just two weeks ago, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the spiritual leader of Iran and technically its supreme authority, let loose a blast of vituperative anti-American rhetoric, denouncing U.S. policymakers as "under the spell" of Zionists. Unsure which faction will prevail, President Clinton has said he is "hopeful" a new dialogue could begin. Then, at press time, the White House was denying rumors that it had dispatched Congressman Tom Lantos as an emissary to Tehran.

Iranian politics are more nuanced than most Americans realize. Iran does not have a totalitarian government made up entirely of raving terrorists (though certainly the government has sponsored terrorist acts in the Middle East and Europe). But, by the same token, the relatively moderate Khatami has adversaries at every turn—such as former President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. Although Rafsanjani spent eight years in power

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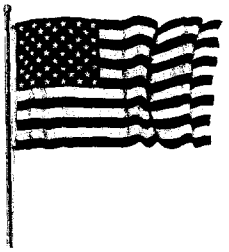

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trying to modernize the Iranian economy over the wishes of the clergy, he is no Khatami ally. Instead, Rafsanjani now heads the nebulous but extremely powerful Expediency Council—a kind of shadow cabinet with offices in the Shah's old palace downtown, right next door to the presidential compound.

Khatami lacks Rafsanjani's serpentine deftness, but his public image as an honest, regular guy may serve him better. While he followed his father into the religious calling, he got a degree in philosophy from the relatively liberal Tehran University. He never finished his doctorate but went on to head the Hamburg Islamic Center (he still speaks good German and Arabic, and some English). After the revolution, Khatami identified himself with the radical wing of newly ascendant religious leaders who wanted no accommodation with the United States and favored heavy state control of the economy. Later, Khatami reappeared as the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance in Rafsanjani's more market-oriented government.

In this job, Khatami had power over basic parameters of everyday life. He was a kind of Minister of Who Can Publish What and How Tightly Women Must Wrap Their Veils. And although the rest of the world may not remember the 1980s as a time of political laxity in Iran, Tehran intellectuals still thank Khatami for the breath of cultural freedom he permitted them during his tenure. Iran's film industry, which has recently produced some highly regarded works for the international festival circuit, really got underway with Khatami's protection. The fact that conservative mullahs ultimately chased Khatami out of office only solidified his reputation as the liberals' angel.

After leaving government, Khatami kept a low profile as head of the National Library, where he pursued the question of how to make books available to people—which is not, of course, what librarians in repressive regimes are supposed to do. One foreign diplomat in Tehran says Khatami approached him to ask how to use the Internet to widen people's access to the library. Despite officially imposed ideological conformity, Iran now has the most developed cyberculture of any country in the Middle East except Israel. Between 50,000 and 100,000 people use email and have access to the World Wide Web—more than in any of Iran's neighbors. Last year, Khatami even had a campaign website—the first in Iranian history.

Many of Iran's problems are economic—and, unfortunately, Khatami's economic advisers are mostly old leftists who believe in rations, coupons, and a good deal of state regulation. But most Iranians want their president to focus more on social and cultural affairs anyway—and that's what got Khatami into office. During the campaign, Khatami vowed to let civil society flourish, to respect freedom of speech, and to follow the law. Female voters, a potent political force despite the veil, loved it when he told a popular women's magazine that, yes, he allowed his wife to drive and, in fact, he even liked having her drive him around.

Since being elected, Khatami has carefully maintained this image. He has refused to allow his picture to hang in government offices alongside Khamenei and the late revolutionary leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. He has also eschewed religious and political honorifics, insisting that people call him simply "Mr. Khatami." The big events of his presidency so far have been cultural—the sudden permission to screen "The Snowman," for example, a film that the previous regime had banned (presumably because the protagonist dresses up as a woman in order to have a better chance of getting a visa to the United States). Conservatives have tried to shut down the movie in at least three provincial cities so far.

Initially, the December Islamic summit, which attracted major Arab leaders such as Crown Prince Abdullah from Saudi Arabia, strengthened Khatami's hand and generated good international press. "We have fallen more in love with him than ever before," says one Tehran intellectual. But the mullahs are fighting back. At the summit, Khatami had to cede the opening statement to Khamenei, who delivered the usual blistering diatribes about Western cultural imperialism.

And rhetoric isn't Khamenei's only weapon. While the supreme leader customarily sends a letter to the new interior minister, granting him authority to keep public order and thus govern most domestic matters, Khatami's Interior Minister Abdullah Nouri hasn't gotten his letter yet—perhaps because he has said he wants political parties to have more freedom. Indeed, the conservative-led parliament has summoned Nouri to explain why he gave permission for a demonstration held at Tehran University in November which questioned the supreme powers of Ayatollah Khamenei.

The mullahs can still count on a committed core of young activists to make their case in the streets. From around the country, there are intermittent reports of Islamic mobs shutting down cultural events such as concerts and movies. Several thousand people turned up in November to threaten Ayatollah Montazeri's home in Qom—after Montazeri publicly challenged Khamenei's fitness for the job of spiritual leader. In November, a gang of about 40 Islamic militants attacked a maverick student leader at Tehran University. The 37-year-old student newspaper publisher, Heshmatollah Tabarzadi, had made a daring speech at the university demanding that Ayatollah Khamenei be accountable to the people. Tabarzadi says the militants ransacked his office, smashed his fax machine, whipped him with electric cords, and fractured his skull. He keeps the white shirt he wore that day, now covered with blood, hanging in his office as proof of what happened.

But most of Iran's young people are decidedly, even wildly, on Khatami's side. This became readily apparent when the national soccer team tied with Australia on November 29, 1997, thereby earning a place in the World Cup finals to be held this summer. Iran went nuts.

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People danced in the streets, embraced strangers, pulled off a few headscarves—all of it behavior forbidden by the Islamic authorities. The soccer team hadn't made a good showing since before the revolution, and now the radio played patriotic marches from pre-1979 days. To top it all off, the team's winning coach, Valdeir Vieira, was a Brazilian infidel. His predecessor's public shows of religiosity pleased the leadership, but he couldn't win a game and was fired in the face of public outrage.

After the Australia game, Khatami immediately congratulated the team. The religious leadership did so, too—but no one could help noticing how, at Friday prayers with the big shots, all the team members were clean-shaven, and all the religious leaders wore beards. Most amazing of all: in its second match on June 21, Iran will face the United States. Iranians can hardly believe their luck. The Chinese had ping-pong, Iranians have soccer. Mustn't diplomacy follow?

Maybe. A rapprochement with the United States would be symbolic of what Iran's youthful population yearns for: a reconciliation with modernity. Thus, all of Iran's factions recognize that whoever makes the first move in that direction will immediately become the darling of the people. Wedded to their own tired, unpopular mantras of "Death to America," Khatami's rivals want to deny him that triumph, and it appears they'll do anything they can to get their way.

CARROLL R. BOGERT was a foreign correspondent with *Newsweek* for twelve years.

Is Clintoncare really back?

REFORM PLACEBO

By Jonathan Chait

Ever since President Clinton's health care reform met its untimely demise in 1994, conventional wisdom has held that the plan was a victim of its own excessive ambition. The thinking was that if only Clinton had sought from the outset to achieve universal coverage through small, incremental steps, instead of trying for universal coverage all at once in a fit of hubristic Rodhamism, the reform effort would have succeeded.

Since then, members of both parties, including the president, have acted upon this view, slowly putting into place a new regime of bite-sized health care reforms. In the summer of 1996, Republican Senator Nancy Kassebaum of Kansas joined with Democratic Senator Ted Kennedy of Massachusetts to propose a bill guaranteeing that people who switched or lost their jobs could buy insurance. After Clinton endorsed the Kassebaum-Kennedy bill, it eventually passed the Senate unanimously. Last spring, Kennedy teamed up with another Senate Republican, Orrin Hatch of Utah, to demand health coverage grants for uninsured children. Clinton successfully included such a measure in last summer's bipartisan budget bill. Since then, he has proposed a "bill of rights," setting federal standards for the treatment of patients by health plans, such as the guarantee of emergency room care. And he is reportedly considering a new program to help the "near elderly"—those between the ages of 54 and 65—obtain medical coverage.

These incremental measures, both proponents and foes agree, essentially amount to the Clinton Plan chopped up into digestible nuggets. "If what I tried before won't work, maybe we can do it another way," said Clinton in a speech last fall. "That's what we've tried to do, a step at a time, until we eventually finish this." The congressional Republican leadership is fighting these reforms for the very same reason Clinton supports them. "It is clear that these initiatives are a Trojan horse for implementing the once-defeated Clinton plan," Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott and Majority Whip Don Nickles wrote in a memo to fellow congressmen. Conservatives hope to kill the new reforms by associating them with the old reforms. HMO lobbyist Karen Ignagni told *The New York Times*: "It's beginning to feel a lot like 1993."

But it's not like 1993, at least politically, in that this time it's the Republicans—not Clinton—who are getting flogged. Kassebaum-Kennedy and kiddiecare eventually sailed through virtually without public opposition, and Clinton's bill of rights is registering Mother Teresa-like approval levels in opinion polls. The few naysayers—insurance lobbies and their conservative allies in Congress—have been stymied by massive Republican defections. Some of the most stringent new HMO regulations, in fact, are sponsored by Republican Representative Charlie Norwood of Georgia and Senator Al D'Amato of New York. "Once these bills hit the floor, it's real hard to oppose them," Bill Gradison, president of the Health Insurance Association of America, conceded to *Congressional Quarterly*.

There's a good reason for this shift. Incremental reform is not politically equivalent to sweeping health care reform because it is not substantively equivalent to it, either. Incrementalism doesn't seek to change the perverse incentives of the current market-driven system, nor does it address the issue of health care costs. This is, of course, part of the reason why it's so popular. It's also why, as a matter of policy, it will likely disappoint.

To understand this paradox, step back for a moment and consider the rationale for health care reform. The main flaws with the current system revolve around the fact that it is voluntary. Employers can choose whether or not to cover their workers; individuals can choose whether or not to buy insurance. This lets people game the system: healthy people choose to forego insurance coverage until they become sick, while insurance companies do the same thing right back by trying to exclude

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high-risk cases and cover only low-risk ones.

Since voluntarism is what ails the system, the heart of any systematic solution ought to be compulsion. But compulsion creates losers—it forces companies to pay for their employees' health care, or people to buy their own insurance. Incrementalism avoids this unpleasantness. It doesn't require that any employer pay for health care, and it doesn't force anyone into an insurance pool. No wonder incrementalism appeals so much to politicians.

Except that expanding coverage in this fashion isn't quite as easy it sounds. Consider the Kassebaum-Kennedy law, which was designed to help prevent insurance companies from denying coverage to people with a high risk of getting sick, a practice known as skimming. Kassebaum-Kennedy didn't attack all skimming. Rather, it focused on a particular kind of skimming, in which people who have insurance change their jobs and are subsequently denied coverage, typically because of a pre-existing health condition. The law required insurance companies to offer coverage to anybody who had previously been insured, which most people consider fair.

But the law didn't require insurance companies to offer job-switchers coverage *at the same rates* they previously paid. So while somebody with a chronic condition like diabetes won't lose coverage if he switches jobs, chances are he'll have to pay a lot more for it—quite possibly more than he can afford. Kennedy-Kassebaum could have prohibited such price discrimination, of course, but that would have created other problems. Since it costs more to insure the sick than it does to insure the healthy, the insurance companies would have had to pass on increases to everyone—which, in turn, would have caused more healthy people to drop out of the plans completely.

This trade-off is inescapable without a universal system. Insuring more sick people, which may be a good idea, means insuring fewer healthy people. Forbidding insurers to choose whether or not to offer coverage while still allowing individuals to choose whether or not to buy insurance inherently creates these kinds of perversities and instabilities.

Another problem with incrementalism arises when the government tries to cover an uninsured population in a system in which employers can decide whether or not to insure their workers. Take, for instance, the child health care law—kiddiecare—which offered federal grants to states to cover uninsured children. The rationale is straightforward. Children in very-low-income families get insurance through Medicaid, while those in higher-income families generally receive coverage from their parents' employers. Kiddiecare aims to cover the kids in between. A state could insure kids in families that earn, say, up to two or three times the poverty level—where you're likely to find parents working in part-time and low-paying jobs that typically don't offer health insurance.

Again, that's a fine idea. But, inevitably, even at lower income levels, you'll be offering insurance to at least some families who already get it through their jobs. This will create a perverse incentive to the good employers—who now offer coverage—to stop doing so. Why should they pay, after all, if the taxpayers will pick up the tab instead?

This phenomenon is called the crowding-out effect, and it neatly illustrates the limits of incrementalism. Partial coverage can work with populations that don't have insurance on their own—the elderly and the extreme poor, for example. But the more the government steps in with other groups, the more the private sector steps back. It is impossible to design a system in which the private sector decides whom to insure and the government insures everybody else. This is why Clinton's goal—universal coverage through incremental steps—cannot happen. In order to achieve universal coverage, either all businesses must be forced to cover their employees (which is what made his 1993 plan politically unpassable), or the government must cover everybody.

So what's wrong with the government covering everybody? Absolutely nothing, if—and only if—it's part of an overhaul of the entire health care system. Simply extending coverage to one group at a time—children, the near-elderly—until the state is paying for everybody isn't the same thing as a systematic overhaul. Achieving universal coverage by incrementally layering new programs would be prohibitively expensive. "The more steps you put into a system," observes Joe White, a health care specialist at the Twentieth Century Fund, "the more money sloshes away in administration and intergovernmental fights."

That kind of inefficiency might sound like nothing more than an annoying side-effect until you consider the original reasons for overhauling the health care system in the first place. Remember, the problem with our system is not just that millions go without insurance. We also have the costliest health care in the world. The point of systematic overhaul was to cover everybody *and* save money. That's why reformers in 1993 explicitly rejected incrementalism, which simply reinforces the irrationalities of the status quo.

Cost control, then, represents the most dramatic difference between health care reform four years ago and health care reform today. Clinton's 1994 plan was an effort to restrain health care spending by harnessing market forces. Incrementalism is an effort to restrain the market forces themselves. It is in this way, ironically, what Clinton is doing now is actually more liberal than what he was doing then.

And that's exactly why it's so politically successful. The public didn't turn against the Clinton plan because it imposed regulations on insurance companies or because it instituted an employer mandate. What the public feared—what Harry and Louise said they feared—was being herded into managed care. Business and insurance lobbies cultivated and preyed upon this anxiety to kill reform in 1994; now Clinton has coopted this same fear and turned it against his old enemies. Somewhere, Hillary Rodham Clinton and Ira Magaziner must be enjoying the joke. •

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The Pentagon's brain-dead two-war strategy.

CALLING MR. X

By Eliot Cohen

Half a century ago, shortly after the end of World War II, the military forces of the United States dominated most of the globe. But America's military leaders faced a strategic predicament: how to complete a postwar demobilization of their vast forces, while at the same time running military governments in faraway countries, adapting to revolutionary military technologies, and preparing for a new great-power challenge to the U.S. On top of that, a brand-new Department of Defense had to explain to a skeptical public why a large military establishment should continue to exist even after it had vanquished the Third Reich and the Japanese Empire.

To the rescue came Mr. X. George Kennan used that pseudonym when he wrote his famous 1947 article on "The Sources of Soviet Conduct" in *Foreign Affairs*, which set forth the principle of containment of America's emerging foe, the Soviet Union. Containment was a superb strategic concept: simple, sweeping, and flexible. Though intended primarily to shape foreign policy, it served defense policy as well. For more than four decades, containment provided the rationale and conceptual framework around which the U.S. constructed its military establishment.

The cold war ended in 1990, and once again the Pentagon finds itself trying to downsize in the context of U.S. global dominance, unconventional missions, revolutionary technological change—and public skepticism about the need for a large military. But, this time, no formidable new foe looms on the horizon, and there is no Mr. X. The Pentagon's pallid substitute for "containment" is a requirement to be ready to fight two major theater wars "nearly simultaneously"—an artificial standard driven by short-term concerns. A better strategic concept would embrace some uncomfortable truths, not least of which is the reality of an America that now acts as a global empire, rather than as one of two rival superpowers, or a normal state.

The Clinton administration first settled on the two-front strategy in 1993, after the vaunted Pentagon policy exercise known as the Bottom Up Review. In that review, the administration called for a force slightly smaller than the "Base Force" President Bush had created, divided into more or less the same units. The Bottom Up Review's designated adversaries were a resurgent Iraq and a bellicose North Korea. The administration argued that each of these "major regional contingencies" would require four or five Army divisions and a similar number of Marine brigades (equivalent to one or two divisions), four or five Navy carrier battle groups, ten Air Force fighter wings, up to 100 bombers, and special forces. Not coincidentally, this was roughly the size of the force that beat Saddam Hussein in 1990-1991.

The notion of maintaining forces sufficient to fight two large regional wars has persisted through the latest iteration of the Pentagon's planning, the Quadrennial Defense Review, which was released last May by Secretary of Defense William Cohen. The nomenclature has changed a bit ("major theater wars" have replaced "major regional contingencies"), and there are minor modifications (for example, the QDR recognizes that peacekeeping missions may divert forces from big regional conflicts), but the basic idea remains the same. The Pentagon will justify the size, composition, and structure of the armed forces on the basis of a requirement to fight another Gulf war and an equally large war in Korea in very close succession—if not at the same time.

The QDR demonstrates how the habits and logic of bureaucracy can turn the work of even the most intelligent, hard-working, and patriotic civil servants into pabulum. Not one Mr. X, but dozens, maybe hundreds of anonymous authors labored to produce this mushy document. Scores of subpanels drafted language which they sent to seven full panels, which provided edited and rewritten drafts to an "Integration Group," which in turn sent a revised copy to a "Senior Steering Group," which modified the resulting document before giving it to the secretary of defense assisted by the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The result was empty phrases ("shaping the environment"), false promises (a "revolution in business affairs"), and phony choices (the United States can choose either isolationism, serving as the world's policeman, or "engagement"). The QDR also relies on bogus measures of military power, such as the insistence on 100,000 troops in Europe and the Pacific—as if we lived in the days of Napoleon when generals measured strength by counting bayonets and sabers.

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But those are cosmetic problems compared to the QDR's more fundamental flaws. For one thing, the strategic vision of the QDR—like the Bottom Up Review before it—stretches Pentagon resources too thin. Although the U.S. military is roughly two-thirds as big as it was during its Reagan-era peak, it is, if anything, more active, consuming billions of dollars to handle exercises, interventions great and small, and routine peacekeeping activities. Satellites and other components of its global infrastructure require replacement and repair. A frenetic pace of overseas deployments (150 to 190 days per year is now common in some units), coupled with shrinking manpower, has steadily but noticeably eroded morale and equipment readiness.

Moreover, by most accounts, the current defense budget underfunds procurement by tens of billions of dollars. Since the Bush era, the Pentagon has kept manpower reductions to a minimum, sustaining pay scales that keep pace with inflation and funding training at the necessary level. But that has meant less and less money for replacing hardware—tanks, planes, and ships. Like the Bush administration before it, the Clinton administration has cut procurement more deeply than manpower. Since 1993, the overall defense budget has declined by 17 percent, direct manpower costs by 20 percent, operations and maintenance by only seven percent, and procurement by 28 percent. Even if the two-major-theater-war concept made strategic sense, the unwillingness to fund it properly would make it untenable in the long run.

But the two-major-theater-war concept does not, in fact, make strategic sense. First, it exaggerates the near-term requirements in the Persian Gulf. It would not take nearly the same forces that the United States dispatched in 1990 to make short work of the enfeebled Iraqi army, and even then, as we now know, Iraqi forces were seriously outgunned. (Moreover, the kind of force—much heavier in air power—required to defeat an Iran bent on closing the Strait of Hormuz would differ from that needed to stop an Iraqi armored drive into Kuwait.) And if North Korea collapses—which is quite possible—half of the strategic two-war scenario will become obsolete overnight. The notion that South Korea will perpetually require large American ground forces to rescue it flies in the face of common sense. With almost twice the population and 15 times the gross domestic product of the North, the Republic of Korea needs American help in the form of some land and (more important) air forces, but not an American rescue.

The problem is not that the Pentagon is asking for too much—the problem is that the Pentagon is not seeking its resources for the right reasons. For example, the American presence in Asia serves to discourage renewed military rivalry among China, Japan, and other states. But rather than ask what kind of forces the U.S. might need to maintain a comfortable lead over China 20 years hence, or even to project forces into a turbulent central Asia in a similar period, the Pentagon has fallen back on cold war thinking. The QDR uses cold war units of account (divisions, carrier battle groups) to denominate military power; its scenarios, physically located in the Far East and Persian Gulf, dwell mentally in a cold war world of precise calculations of forces required to defend an opponent attacking after just so many days of warning and with just so many forces. Small wonder that in its recent report the National Defense Panel—a congressionally mandated but administration-appointed nine-member group—looked askance at the QDR. Although mostly composed of pro-administration figures, the panel nonetheless concluded that the two-major-theater-war standard would inhibit development of the kind of armed forces America would need 15 years hence.

A *real* reexamination of defense policy—the kind Clinton promised when he took office—would begin by dealing with the mismatch between resources and force size, recognizing that the Pentagon needs more money, not less. For a decade now, the defense budget has been falling in absolute terms, from a 1985 high of $415 billion in current dollars to $254 billion today. Considered in relationship to the overall size of the economy, however, the decline is sharper: the Pentagon will soon absorb three percent of the gross domestic product as opposed to more than six percent during the Reagan years. The Pentagon says that savings from reorganization and base closings will pay for more procurement. Such hopes, however, have always proved chimerical. There is no substitute for a bigger budget. Indeed, without some modest increase in real levels of spending—no more than that of the growth of the economy overall—the Defense Department will suffer a slow erosion of material and human quality.

And that would be only a beginning. One sign of a real strategic rethinking would be an examination of issues traditionally ignored by Pentagon leaders. Every great period of strategic reform in the past, for example, has involved a radical change in America's military educational system. After the Civil War, General William Tecumseh Sherman created the Army's first professional schools for advanced military education; after the Spanish-American War, Secretary of War Elihu Root created a war college to train a new general staff. The recent plan to create a "chancellor" for defense education—a new layer of bureaucracy—is quite different from educational reform, which might merge some of the war colleges and create new schools for teaching joint operational art—the interweaving of ground, air, sea, and space forces that increasingly characterizes modern warfare.

Genuine reform would also consider changes upsetting to service identity and tradition. Congress recently killed, with Pentagon compliance (if not encouragement), an interesting idea for a new kind of naval vessel, the "arsenal ship"—a floating barge filled with

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launch tubes for an array of long-range cruise and ballistic missiles. (You knew the arsenal ship was doomed when the Navy began calling it a "Maritime Fire Support Demonstrator" instead.) There are other interesting ideas—for example, former Air Force Chief of Staff Ron Fogleman suggested that in the foreseeable future the Air Force will become a "space and air force." Fresh thinking will require a push from the top of a Pentagon that still plans to spend a third of a trillion dollars on short-range tactical aircraft.

A real strategic concept will wrestle with three very different kinds of military challenges that the United States can expect to face—well beyond the major theater wars that dominate Pentagon thinking. The first is a potentially great power challenge from a state that cannot match the United States across the board but that may invest in the military technologies to thwart U.S. projection of military power: China, for example. The second is that of peacekeeping and peacemaking: the tiresome and unwelcome duties that keep American soldiers patrolling in Bosnia and on watch over the skies of Iraq. And the third is terrorism, including the possible use of weapons of mass destruction.

Another way to put it is that the United States needs an imperial strategy. Defense planners could never admit it openly, of course, and most would feel uncomfortable with the idea, but that is, in fact, what the United States at the end of the twentieth century is—a global empire. Talk of "cooperative security" masks the reality that in any serious military confrontation, the central question is whom the United States asks to cooperate. When, as in Bosnia, it is prepared to act, its allies usually go along; when, as in the recent confrontation with Saddam Hussein, the U.S. wavers, friendly states retreat into passivity. One cannot separate the so-called "soft power" of the United States—the global dominance of its culture, beginning with its language—from its military strength. Rock fans around the world listen in English; so do fighter pilots. The same information technologies that make the Internet a decidedly American phenomenon provide the nervous systems of American military power. Free trade rests on common consent, to be sure, but would it exist absent America's military dominance?

Like many past empires, the United States does not seek new commitments or conquests. But also like past empires, it finds itself drawn into the quarrels of other states and the anarchy of disintegrating polities, from the Balkans to the Horn of Africa. It towers above other states in the scale of its strategic thinking, the resources at its command, and the military capabilities it can bring to bear. Yet its military feels overcommitted, outnumbered, and underfunded. Hampered by the restrictions of imperial foreign policy (such as the need to work with militarily inferior and politically fractious allies) and by an indifferent domestic opinion, thrifty with the lives of its own volunteer soldiery, U.S. planners would prefer to prepare for quick, unconstrained, knock-down fights with easily identified opponents. Instead, they will spend their years waging "savage wars of peace" in one corner of the globe while worrying about the rise of envious rivals in another.

Like most empires, the United States faces the strategic problem of overextension. As the British found themselves mired in the Sudan at the end of the nineteenth century in order to protect Egypt, to protect the Suez Canal, to protect the route to India, to protect India itself, so too the United States finds itself drawn into obscure conflicts for tertiary interests. Because, for empires, "the reputation of power is power," as Hobbes put it, American credibility is often at stake in a way that is not the case for other countries. And because the U.S. is seen (correctly) as overwhelmingly powerful, other countries will feel even less willingness than in the past to share its military burdens. The disregard by America's NATO partners of the costs of expanding NATO beyond its current borders is a case in point. So is the resistance of France and Russia to U.S. policy toward Saddam Hussein—a resistance based not only on those countries' economic interests in Iraq, but also on their sheer psychological need to exhibit independence from the U.S.

The final and most serious danger of imperial strategy is complacency. Contrary to the fears of many internationalists, the American people have so far not demanded the abandonment of far-flung garrisons; nor have they deplored routine but prudent uses of force overseas. Quite the contrary: they accept the episodic bombing of Iraqi air defense sites, the patrolling of Bosnian villages, and even the deployment of paratroopers to Kazakhstan with an aplomb that their grandparents would have found astonishing. But this acceptance rests on two assumptions: one, that volunteers, not draftees, will make the requisite sacrifices, and two, that no major setback can befall the American military.

The first is reasonable; the second is not, as even such relatively minor episodes as the 1996 terrorist bombing of the U.S. Air Force barracks in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, reveals. More generally, the historical experience of both the U.S. and other global powers suggests that success in one war may only pave the way for nasty surprises in the next. Think of the red-coated British soldiers deployed in front of ragged Boer farmers peering at them through the gunsights of Mauser rifles. The United States is today by far the most powerful state on the planet. If it chooses to remain so, citizen and soldier alike must brace themselves for the occasional imperial fiasco. More important, they will have to accept the uncomfortable notion that they are wielding military power in a way that is historically unusual for a country that has long viewed empires with proper republican suspicion. America's strategic vision will thus have to peer inward, as well as out, if we are to play our new role in the world successfully. •

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The lawless lawmen of our nation's capital.

D.C. CONFIDENTIAL

By Carl T. Rowan Jr.

Until recently, few residents of Washington, D.C., had ever heard of the tawdry crime known as "fairy shaking." It works like this: a blackmailer stakes out a club that caters to gay men, watching customers as they go in. The blackmailer picks out someone who appears to be married (based on such indicators as a baby seat in his car) and takes pictures of the man and his car. The crook then traces the victim by his license plate number, calls him on the phone, and threatens to send his wife the pictures unless he coughs up a large amount of cash.

Now, however, fairy shaking is front-page news in the nation's capital—thanks to the work of a leading member of the city's Metropolitan Police Department, Lt. Jeffery Stowe. Unfortunately, Stowe did not make headlines by arresting someone for this crime. Rather, Stowe, commander of the MPD's anti-extortion unit, is himself the city's most notorious alleged fairy shaker. On November 25, 1997, he was arrested by the FBI and charged with blackmailing men for as much as $10,000. (Stowe has denied wrongdoing.)

Stowe was not just any cop. He was a close friend of the District's chief of police, Larry Soulsby. Stowe and Soulsby even shared an apartment in the swanky Lansburgh building, paying $650 per month for a two-bedroom unit that normally rents for between $1,700 and $2,000. The building's manager said they gave the discount because Stowe said he needed the unit for an undercover assignment.

Confronted by the scandal, Soulsby denied knowledge of his friend's activities, calling Stowe just a casual acquaintance. But it was too late. The chief was forced to resign. And that may be just the beginning of his troubles. Witnesses have told a federal grand jury that Soulsby personally ordered MPD auditors not to audit certain police cash accounts that Stowe controlled, and from which, law enforcement officials say, Stowe was embezzling thousands of dollars. Soulsby has said he told auditors that other accounts should take priority.

CARL T. ROWAN JR., a former FBI agent, is an attorney and corporate security consultant who belongs to the Law Enforcement Alliance of America's legislative task force. He serves as an unpaid member of the mayor's advisory committee to help select the next D.C. police chief.

The national media treated Soulsby's resignation as a one-day story: the downfall of a bad cop at the top. The scarier truth is that the fairy-shaking scandal was just the tip of a vast iceberg of incompetence and corruption. Washington's police currently face investigations by the U.S. Attorney's office, the D.C. Inspector General, and the D.C. City Council. The alleged wrongdoing includes bribery, extortion, theft, perjury, excessive force, and fraud. The cumulative weight of those scandals—plus my own review of internal law enforcement records, contacts with federal law enforcement officials, and interviews with dozens of current and former D.C. officers—convinces me that, if anything, the public is not yet concerned about the rot in the D.C. police.

The District's U.S. Attorney's office—the local equivalent of the D.A.—maintains a list of more than 300 cops whose backgrounds are so tainted, or whose professional behavior has been so questionable, that they cannot testify in court because defense attorneys would easily impeach their testimony. (Most of these officers continue to draw full pay and benefits from the cash-strapped city.) The D.C. police no longer mount much more than a token effort against fencing operations, auto thefts, and other property crimes. The department even disbanded its drug interdiction teams at the city's train and bus stations in 1996, declaring in a stunning statement that drugs moving through the District to other cities are not the MPD's concern.

Apparently, the cops focus their efforts on street patrol and homicide investigations. But while D.C. still has one of the highest per capita murder rates of any city in the nation, its police solve barely a third of the hundreds of homicides that occur each year. The current roster of deaths for which no one has yet been arrested ranges from the mysterious killings of six women in the mostly black Petworth section to the cold-blooded shootings of three young workers at a Starbucks coffee shop in mostly white Georgetown.

To be sure, the news from the war on crime in Washington isn't all bad. As in most other major American cities, the rate of violent crime has dropped recently; homicide, for example, fell by 19 percent from 1996 to 1997. Cyclical and demographic factors account for most of that improvement, but Soulsby-implemented reforms helped, too. The former chief instituted a plan

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to move some 600 officers from desk jobs to street patrol. At the recommendation of an outside consulting firm, the department also adopted a new model of community policing that both officers and citizens have praised. And any critique must acknowledge that the city's financial crisis has forced the D.C. cops to endure supply shortages and low pay.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that the financial crisis would have been more manageable—and the crime rate would have fallen much faster—without the rampant incompetence and corruption that have accumulated in the force since Congress gave D.C. home rule more than two decades ago. Responsible political leadership is ultimately the key to building excellent police institutions. And for most of the last 19 years, Washington, D.C., and its police force have been presided over by Mayor Marion Barry.

Inaugurated as Washington's first elected home-rule-mayor in 1979, Barry's attitudes toward law enforcement were shaped by his '60s career as a street civil rights activist, during which time he had his share of run-ins with what was, in fact, a mostly white, sometimes racist, and often brutal, D.C. force that he called "an occupation army." (Barry's own penchant for, shall we say, "pushing the envelope" on matters relating to the legality of his own conduct was not yet so apparent.)

The irony, though, is that Barry, as mayor, inherited a force that was much improved. In the wake of Washington's disastrous 1968 race riot, the federal government decided both to beef up the police force and to make it look more like its majority-black city. The feds built the force from 3,000 members in 1969 to 5,100 members by the time of Barry's election—and they went about it the right way. They put together a competitive benefits package and launched a worldwide recruitment effort through the armed forces and other law enforcement agencies. They sought out candidates who had maturity, discipline, and a proven work ethic, then trained and equipped them properly.

The result was a police department of inspirational quality. Between 1970 and 1976, District crime fell by nearly one-half. As an FBI agent investigating bank robberies in the city's suburbs, I looked forward to working alongside the MPD. Chiefs like Maurice Cullinane and Burtell Jefferson were consummate pros aided by talented, conscientious administrators. Their Homicide Branch, Repeat Offender Project, and Civil Disturbance Unit all had solid national reputations. The Robbery, Narcotics, and Sex branches contained some of the sharpest detectives in the nation. Uniformed officers were usually motivated and self-disciplined, and those who were not quickly felt the wrath of their hawkeyed sergeants. One veteran officer even told me of superiors who would diligently review officers' arrest reports and mark incorrect spelling and grammar with red ink.

Barry, however, promised to shrink this fine force to 3,000, and got it to 3,800 in 1987, when an alarmed Congress stopped him. And Barry took steps that diminished the force qualitatively as well as quantitatively. Patronage in the guise of local "empowerment" has always been the hallmark of Barry's governing philosophy. Thus, he saw the MPD in much the same way as he saw the city's civilian bureaucracy: as a source of jobs for people whose main qualification was their eligibility to vote for Barry. In 1980, the D.C. City Council enacted a Barry-supported measure that reserved all city jobs, police jobs included, for residents. The rule helped Barry claim that white outsiders would no longer be policing the city's mostly black population. It also drastically reduced the pool of eligible candidates for the police department. Recruiters became alarmed at the poor quality of some of the new recruits as standards were "relaxed."

Congress soon rescinded the residency requirement, and in 1985 the city unveiled a rigorous new police exam—a test specially designed not to discriminate on the basis of race. Everyone who reviewed it agreed it was a solid exam. But even after the test was put into use, unfit candidates continued to arrive at the police academy. Many were functionally illiterate; some displayed signs of mild retardation, according to training instructors who worked at the academy during that period.

The instructors were at a loss to explain how these new recruits were passing the exam. The leader of the police union, Gary Hankins, investigated. He found that Barry had shifted administration of the test from the police department to an office that reported directly to him. That office took the actual test scores and added points to those who were black, female, residents of D.C., or graduates of D.C. public schools. The policy was both a de facto restoration of the residency requirement and a perversion of legitimate affirmative action goals. People whose "unconverted" scores were not even close to passing went to the top of the hiring list. Hankins took his findings to Congress but was rebuffed by Democrats wary of taking on home rule.

As a result, police academy instructors watered down the curriculum and kept recruits beyond their scheduled graduation date to teach remedial reading and writing. The police academy developed what some officers contemptuously called a "no fail" policy. One 1989-90 recruit told me his training was "pitiful" and said recruits were given the answers to their tests before they were administered. Those who failed were allowed unlimited retests until they passed, he told me,

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adding: "You had to be brain-dead not to pass."

This was happening at a time when other major police departments, faced with a surfeit of talented applicants, were actually tightening hiring standards, requiring either military experience or at least two years of college. To this day, the D.C. force continues to require only a GED. And the department does not administer lie-detector tests about past arrests and drug histories—a standard procedure at other major police departments.

Consequently, on some occasions, training instructors had to deal with recruits whom veteran cops recognized as former crooks. During one heavy hiring period between 1989 and 1990, the District performed inadequate background checks or, in some cases, no background checks on its new hires. The result was a crop of recruits who have become notorious for their lack of ability and outright misconduct—including eleven of the so-called "Dirty Dozen" officers who were indicted in December 1993 for bribery and drug conspiracy.

Recruiting officers have told me privately that recent additions to the D.C. force included a man who openly bragged about being an active drug dealer, a man with a history of auto theft, a woman with a medical drainage shunt in her head that prohibits strenuous activity, and a man who was drummed out of the military because of knees so bad that he could not march in formation. As one veteran told me: "On a raid, I'm more afraid of the officers behind me than the criminals in front of me."

Yet, incredibly, the MPD has no system of efficiency ratings for its officers. Bad cops have just as much chance of winning choice assignments as good ones. In fact, lazy, passive officers may fare even better, since they receive fewer citizen complaints than aggressive, hardworking cops. An officer who makes more vehicle stops and investigates more suspicious subjects is likely to have more arrests and close more cases. That same officer will probably get complaints from some citizens who feel that they have been stopped unfairly. Only an honest internal rating system can sort out the claims. But Washington doesn't have one. Thus, as more than one officer told me, D.C. cops have learned that the best way to get into trouble is to work hard.

Perhaps the only thing more disturbing than the low caliber of cops on Washington's streets is the low caliber of senior officers responsible for managing them. In fact, what distresses the D.C. cops I know even more than their low pay and meager benefits is the lack of standards and discipline at the top of the department.

Consider what happened one evening during the summer of 1985. Officers patrolling in northwest Washington noticed a vehicle that had crashed into a tree. They stopped to investigate, and the occupant of the vehicle fled on foot into nearby woods, according to my interviews with officers knowledgeable about the case. Pursuing officers caught the man, who violently resisted arrest. Finally subdued, the arrestee, who told police his name was "Herbert Williams," was taken to the hospital for treatment and toxicology tests. He was at the hospital, handcuffed to a gurney, when another police officer happened by and recognized who "Herbert Williams" was: Capt. Winston Robinson of the MPD.

Such reprehensible behavior by a senior police official would be a career-ender in most cities, but not in Washington. Robinson was ordered released, and today he is Inspector Robinson, commander of the police department's seventh district. When I spoke with him in 1995, Robinson did not deny this version of events; he said it was ancient history, and he had done many good things since.

Nor was Robinson's misadventure entirely an aberration. In the fall of 1994, responding to a complaint of drunk and disorderly men in the street, officers confronted the men and asked them to disperse. The group became rowdy and abusive, and back-up units were rushed to the scene. After the situation was brought under control, it was learned that the abusive crowd was a group of off-duty MPD officers. Among them was Deputy Chief William Sarvis. Sarvis got a two-day suspension for that one. But he remained on the job until 1997, when he retired after internal police and U.S. Attorney investigations revealed that he had bought goods from a friend who had herself bought them using a credit card stolen from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. Sarvis denied knowing that the card was stolen, and no criminal charges were filed.

In 1996, Harry Hill and Christopher Sanders, sergeants in an elite police anti-gang unit, refused to authorize attendance and pay records for a detective in the unit who had never shown up for work during the two months since he had joined it. (The detective came to the anti-gang unit after another scandal got him kicked off Barry's security detail.) The sergeants have told the City Council that they were physically threatened by their lieutenant and received disciplinary transfers. Their own commander, Inspector Carolyn Boggs, refused to help them, telling them in a letter that her hands were tied because the detective and the lieutenant were friends of Mayor Barry.

The sergeants had no better luck with their deputy chief, the department's internal affairs division, or Chief Soulsby, until they went outside their department to the FBI, and the story became public. A weak "investigation" by the department's internal affairs division ensued, but the detective, the lieutenant, and the deputy chief all retired without penalty, and without ever having been questioned by the department's internal affairs division, according to November 1997 testimony before the D.C. City Council. Boggs herself recently retired after an internal police investigation found that she had obtained more than $10,000 in overtime pay without going through proper procedures.

The early 1990s were devastating to the MPD for more reasons than just negligent recruiting. The crack wars sent the annual murder tally above 400, making D.C. the nation's deadliest city. The city declared a "crime emergency" in 1993 and debated calling in the National Guard to patrol the streets. Meanwhile, Washington was hemorrhaging red ink, requiring across-the-board bud-

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get cuts for all city agencies, including the police.

Indeed, after his 1994 reelection as mayor (following a spell in jail for cocaine possession), Barry handed the cops a demoralizing four percent pay cut—his way, it seems, of letting them know who was boss. When a member of Congress proposed offering D.C. $8 million to restore the pay, Barry rejected the funds, huffing that the police would have to learn to get by with less, just like everyone else. Officers arrived at work to see copy machines being repossessed. They had to buy their own pens and notebooks—even brake shoes for their patrol cars.

In the fall of 1995, Barry appointed then-Assistant Chief Larry Soulsby to be the chief of police, replacing Fred Thomas, a relatively effective chief who had been appointed by Barry's predecessor, Sharon Pratt Kelly, but who retired rather than remain under Barry. Snickers reverberated throughout the law-enforcement community because Soulsby was viewed as a plodding yes-man whose major professional feat was to have spent more than two decades in law enforcement without ever distinguishing himself in any way. But he was the perfect choice for a mayor who preferred a chief he could control. And Soulsby was white—a fact that won Barry points with the city's influential white minority, many of whom assumed from Soulsby's skin color that he could not be a Barry flunkie.

Soulsby's first official act was stunning and puzzling. He transferred the force's hugely successful homicide commander, Lou Hennessy, who had rebuilt the MPD homicide squad to greatness. Hennessy had taken command in 1993, and, in one year, achieved a case-closure rate of 70 percent, at a time when the national average was 59 percent. Street gangs so feared the tenacious Hennessy that, on November 22, 1994, a gang-banger with a machine gun invaded his office in an attempt to kill him. One detective and two FBI agents were killed in the ensuing shoot-out. Attorney General Janet Reno honored Hennessy's squad as a national model in October 1995—just two weeks before Soulsby ousted him.

To explain his action, Soulsby claimed in an off-the-record session with local reporters that Hennessy was himself under federal investigation for misconduct. But that story crumbled when the reporters checked it out with the U.S. Attorney's office. Federal law enforcement sources have told me that the FBI is investigating a possible link between Hennessy's transfer and the fact that he was closing in on one of Barry's aides as the suspect in a kidnapping-murder case. After Soulsby replaced Hennessy with an inexperienced captain, the squad's overall performance quickly deteriorated. Officers logged hundreds of thousands of dollars in phony overtime pay, and the case against the mayor's aide went unworked for two years, according to internal police documents. Evidence implicating the mayor's aide has been removed from the file, according to testimony Hennessy gave to the City Council in October 1997. Soulsby has denied transferring Hennessy at Barry's behest.

And 1995 was also the year Congress appointed a powerful control board to oversee the District's deteriorating finances. The board quickly realized that fear of crime was a major factor driving businesses and taxpayers to the suburbs. By 1997, after a series of highly publicized, vicious murders—including the killings of three MPD officers and two cases in which gang members stopped ambulances to finish off wounded "drive-by" shooting victims—the control board took control of the MPD from Barry and hired the consulting firm of Booz-Allen & Hamilton to evaluate and overhaul it.

Booz-Allen soon released a report that confirmed what many people had long suspected: a lot of police officers were doing very little to earn their paychecks during Soulsby's two-year tenure. In a force of 3,600, only 27 officers made more than 100 arrests per year, and 1,200 of them had not made a single arrest in the year prior to inquiry. A subsequent report confirmed that 49 of the roughly 80 homicide detectives had not closed a single case in the previous year; the department was solving just 34 percent of all murders.

Despite this miserable record, the control board, stubbornly unwilling to admit its error in not sacking Soulsby earlier, stood by the chief—that is, until the scandal over Stowe's fairy shaking. Now, the District has commenced a national search for a new chief. City government spin doctors are trying to depict the police department's problems as a matter of insufficient budgets and a few bad apples. Meanwhile, many nervous citizens are calling for a federal takeover of the cops.

But just as it would be wrong to see the department's problems in terms of the downfall of one bad chief and his errant sidekick, it is probably too late to imagine that much more can be solved by reducing Barry's power. Home rule did not create a Barry dictatorship so much as it created a city that ultimately no one governs. The federal government always kept some authority over budgets and such key functions as criminal prosecution. Thus, accountability for major decisions was never perfectly clear. Into this nebula of uncertain authority, corruption crept. And that fundamental problem has only been compounded by recent federal "rescue" efforts that have left Washington under the fragmented control of House and Senate committee barons, a rump City Council, the White House, the federal courts, the control board, and "Mayor-for-life" Barry himself.

Unless these disparate actors can work together, reform will fail. And reform must not fail. The collapse of effective law enforcement in the capital of the world's oldest democracy is more than a source of fear and shame for the city's residents—though that is bad enough. It is also a national disgrace. What's needed is more than a change in personnel at the top, or tinkering by high-priced consultants. The D.C. police need a thorough restructuring of the department's practices—everything from recruitment to basic ethics to, yes, grammar and spelling on police reports. We know what works, because not so long ago the MPD itself was a fine department. Alas, recent history also shows that it is much easier to debase standards than it is to restore them. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

New York Jews

At last Woody Allen's appearance in a leading role serves a purpose. Unintended, perhaps, but effective. In **Deconstructing Harry** (Fine Line), Allen's latest, his acting is, as always, coarse and repetitive, accompanied constantly by so much hand-wagging that he seems the victim of St. Vitus. But Harry, the Jewish New York novelist whom he plays, is such a despicable, exploitative, deceptive egotist that an authentic performance of the role—say, by Dustin Hoffman—would have made him unbearable. As we watch Allen we know that the part is not intended to be credible, like the other roles in the film: it's just an occasion for Allen's shtick. Harry is a convenience to make the film possible, as is the fact that so many women have been mad about him. Even the hooker we see is sympathetic to him.

Still, Allen's cartoon acting is all the more noticeable because he is surrounded by so many good actors. Or maybe, because Harry is so dreadful, Allen's cartoon acting now seems more egregious in these surroundings. Judy Davis has the opening scene with him, an ex-girlfriend who is murderously angry because Harry has utilized their relationship in his new novel; and Davis is excellent. Demi Moore, as a former wife who became devoutly Jewish, to Harry's discomfort, is funny. Kirstie Alley, as another former wife, very hostile, steams through her scenes. Other pleasing performances come from Caroline Aaron, Billy Crystal, and Elisabeth Shue. Richard Benjamin is at ease as one of Harry's autobiographical characters in a novel. Robin Williams amuses as a character in one of Harry's short stories that might have come from Ben Hecht.

These last two characters appear in some of the several episodes that are reenactments of Harry's fiction. Late in the film Harry confronts several of his characters in the, shall we say, flesh, but this is not a Pirandellian venture. It occurs simply because Allen needs more material to keep his film going.

All that really happens in the film's present tense is that Harry goes upstate to his university to be honored. He kidnaps his small son, who lives with the divorced mother, to accompany him on this trip. His affection for his son is Harry's one positive quality; yet he also pays a hooker in hot pants $500 to go along with them. (A great pal for his son, yes?) The university ceremony is stymied for various reasons, but Allen, perhaps touching his Fellini file, has it happen anyway in a dream sequence; the ceremony is held and all the people in his life, including his fictional characters, attend.

Deconstructing Harry is really just a series of sketches, but many of them are amusing because this Manhattan Punchinello works with competent actors and because his dialogue is lithe and sometimes quotable. ("Tradition is the illusion of permanence.") The film shows yet again that Allen knows how to flatter his audience: Harry is a sexually busy, glib atheist, exploitative of women, whose continual patronage of hookers is clearly his ideal in man-woman relationships, which is why his marriages failed. Apparently audiences, American and otherwise, male and female, either identify with this character or are amused by his witty cynicism in a medium not especially noted for either quality.

Cinematic note: Allen and his editor, Susan E. Morse, use small jump cuts all through this picture, but they can't be called Godardian. They don't mirror any serious moral anarchism in the film itself. They're just décor.

Arguing the World (First Run), a documentary written and directed by Joseph Dorman and given its American premiere at the Film Forum in New York, is about the New York intellectuals. That now-familiar phrase signifies a group, most of whom were Jews, most of whom went to City College in the 1930s, who passionately argued political and cultural issues of the day. Their difference from other young people doing the same is that they became prominent and influential thereafter in various intellectual pursuits. So many books and articles about them have appeared that much of the material in Dorman's film is familiar. Yet the power of film is so strong that to see these figures through the years, with old snapshots, with later film clips and even later interviews, to hear them talk about their ideas and their ideas about others' ideas, is absorbing.

Dorman has selected four men:

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Amistad. *Steven Spielberg and a first-rate cast really recreate the past. This story of the slaves who revolted on board the* Amistad *in 1839 is not complete, or completely balanced, here; but the significance and the agony are strong. (Reviewed 12/22/97)* **The Sweet Hereafter.** *Simple, quiet, poignant. About a town that loses most of its children in a school bus accident—and what follows. (12/8/97)* **The Wings of the Dove.** *Two of the three main characters are well realized in this colorful transcription of James. (12/1/97)* **The Winter Guest.** *Emma Thompson and her mother, Phyllida Law, play daughter and mother in this wintry yet somehow sardonic account of bereavements. Alan Rickman directs so exquisitely that the lack of thematic conclusion hardly matters. (1/5&12/97)*—**SK**

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Nathan Glazer, Daniel Bell, Irving Kristol, and Irving Howe. Certainly they were four of the most influential in their circle. Anyone who knows anything about them recognizes that the line-up is three against one; all four started as political radicals of one tinge or another, and the first three subsequently moved rightward, Kristol the furthest. Howe, although he changed the quality of his radical views, found, and all his life stood by, democratic socialism.

Dorman gives context to his accounts of these four interwoven lives. He paints in the Depression years and the war years and their effects on his four men. We hear often from them and also from others who knew them and their ambience—Alfred Kazin, William Phillips, Michael Walzer, Diana Trilling among them. We see how signal events affected the four principals, from the founding of a magazine (*Partisan Review*) to cataclysmic news from the USSR—the infamous Moscow trials of 1938. (The full account of those trials was published by the Soviet Union in English and was available in New York. I read it in 1940 and remember being shocked, not only by the contents but by the Soviet Union's eagerness to have those facts known widely.)

One of Dorman's statements is problematic. In the voice-over commentary, agreeably read by Alan Rosenberg, he says that the Jews who came to America had been immersed in religion in Europe but that when they came here, they substituted politics for religion. This is to overlook both Jewish radical politics in Europe and Jewish religious fervor here.

Bell and Glazer and Kristol speak with conviction, with considerable modesty and considerable humor about their lives and the changes en route; and as remote as their current views may be from our own, they make plain how they arrived at those views. (Reductively, one can say there were two basic reasons: Stalin and a growing disbelief in statism.) Still, the most eloquent of the lot is Howe who, as literary critic and political commentator, rarely received the praise he deserved for the sheer luster of his prose. Howe was as much repelled by Stalin and blind statism as the other three, yet he clung to the ideal of democratic socialism. Certainly this was a political conviction in him, yet to some friends of his, it seemed that it was also a matter of integrity, of not betraying his early belief in the perfectibility of man.

Personal note: I hadn't fully realized how much I miss Irving Howe until I saw Dorman's film. He and I were not close friends; I saw him only occasionally, but I was always aware of his presence in the world. I miss that presence. •

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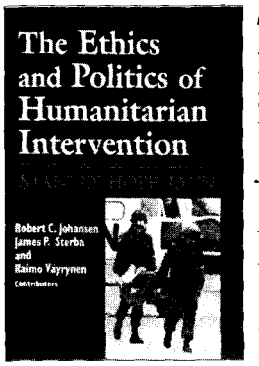

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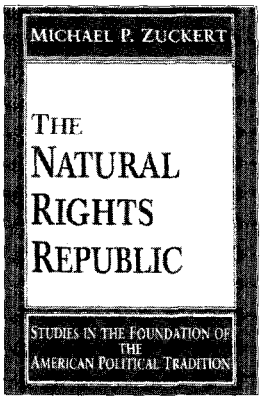

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The evil that has no explanation.

Innocence and Experience

By André Aciman

I.

"I am Pierre's little brother." The sentence is spoken by a little boy who has just been asked his name. The boy can't remember his name. All he knows is that he is Pierre's *petit frère*, that Pierre knows everything about him, that one had better ask Pierre such questions since, in the young boy's imagination, everything about him is already subsumed in Pierre. They are one and the same person. Pierre is just the bigger version.

Until recently, Pierre's little brother never had to give anyone his name, or turn to anyone who didn't know it. He had probably never strayed far enough from home to have to know more about himself. But at Drancy, the temporary transit camp near Paris, which saw the deportation of 61,000 of the 75,700 Jews from France, Pierre has disappeared, or is nowhere to be found, or has been taken away; as have his parents. The little boy feels so thoroughly stranded that, had he even known his name, fear, shock, and a profound sense of loss and displacement might have prevented him from remembering it.

According to Serge Klarsfeld's brief but very moving account in *French Children of the Holocaust*, there were many more boys and girls like Pierre's little brother at Drancy. And as Odette Daltroff-Baticie, an eyewitness in 1943, writes in a passage quoted by Klarsfeld, "the names and addresses [that the children's] mothers wrote on their clothes have been erased by rain; or else, either inadvertently or while playing, they traded clothes with another child." Children are malleable. In less than six months, a boy might acquire a new name, a new home, new clothes, new siblings. At that age, a child is a wax slate on which whatever is written can be easily overwritten. Nothing that we give our children sticks unless we are there to give it again tomorrow. Identity is seldom more than a scatter of memories over which we apply the same coat for good measure each day. Change the dye, alter the props, jostle the facts hard enough and early enough, and you have, more or less, a new human being.

This may be a tribute to the miracle of survival; but it is also a galling affront to what we would like to think are eternal truths about others, about those we love, about ourselves. Our core exists, does it not? And old wounds flare up, don't they? Well, maybe they don't. Sometimes the pressure is too great to resist. Memory drives a hard bargain, but the soul sells out in the end. So who is the real Binjamin Wilkomirski? And whatever happened to Edgardo Mortara, kidnapped by the Pope's agents and forcibly converted a century ago? And what of all the converted Jewish children—the Hidden Jews, as they are called—who still do not know that they were entrusted to Catholic families during the Holocaust and whose identity and whereabouts the church still will not reveal?

French Children of the Holocaust: A Memorial
by Serge Klarsfeld
(New York University Press, 1,881 pp., $95)

Fragments: Memories of a Wartime Childhood
by Binjamin Wilkomirski
translated by Carol Brown Janeway
(Schocken, 155 pp., $20)

The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara
by David I. Kertzer
(Knopf, 350 pp., $26)

For Pierre's little brother, however, these questions are moot. Like many other children who were wrenched from their mothers' arms and arrived in "filthy, deplorable and unimaginable conditions"—"a cloud of insects surrounds them, and a terrible stench"—Pierre's brother is awaiting transport to Poland, where he is to be reunited with his family. Dysentery and its attendant ills are commonplace at Drancy. Few of the children know what the word "transport" really means, and none is able to read the deadly irony behind the promise of their final "reunification." But when the time comes to leave the packed stairwell of Drancy, where Jewish children have been jammed for days in filth, all begin to struggle desperately against the gendarmes who are violently dragging them downstairs.

Many of the children had already suffered "brutal mistreatment by the French police and administration," and must have sensed that such summary cruelty could only bode worse once they reached those places where their parents were allegedly expecting them. Still, despite their panic and their wailing and the sense that all this leads to death and nothing else, none of them, not even their parents who had preceded them on the journey east, could imagine the unimaginable. That is what terror is all about.

Next to the manufacture of death, the greatest invention of the Third Reich was the manufacture of fear. It degraded millions, forcing out the worst childhood monsters that every adult likes to think have been outgrown, overcome, put behind. What could be more terrifying than to be thrown back to one's earliest nightmares, to have them magnified a thousandfold, and find no solace anywhere—except, perhaps, in the conciliatory words with which SS officers would sometimes delude passengers upon their arrival at the death camps? And what could be more desperate than to watch one's father suddenly revert to a helpless, defenseless shell of a man, shouted down, overpowered, and taken away by men wielding whips and firearms?

It is small wonder that some of the most powerful pages in Elie Wiesel's *Night*, in Yehuda Nir's *The Lost Childhood*, and in Binjamin Wilkomirski's *Fragments* are not just about children experiencing and witnessing physical and psychological trauma, but about children who experienced the ultimate indignity of watching their own fathers become frightened children, then weep, then waste away, and sometimes turn to their own children for the reassurance and the protection that they themselves could no longer provide, in a world in which fear and sorrow do not ennoble the victim but degrade him, and in his degradation compel the victim to feel almost as loathsome to himself as he is to his executioner. "I felt like a squashed caterpillar oozing in the dust," thinks Jerzy Kosinski's boy in *The Painted Bird*. "I was genuinely ashamed of my appearance. I had nothing against his killing me."

André Aciman, who teaches French literature at Bard College, is the author most recently of *Out of Egypt: A Memoir* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux/Riverhead).

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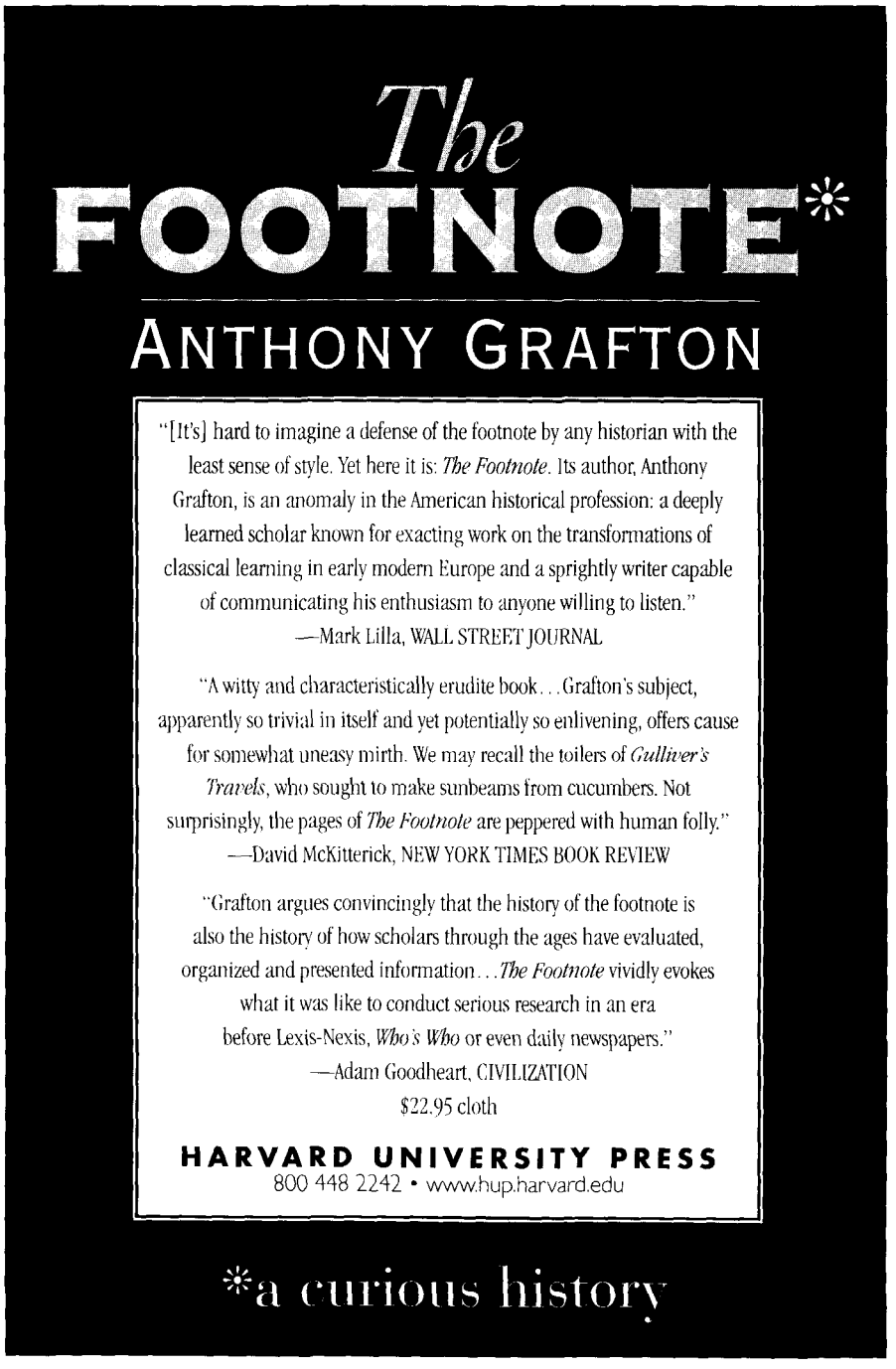
Fear dismembers the self, tearing up identity until what remains, as Wilkomirski shows, are nothing more than tatters, fragments, a self that no longer has solidarity with itself or with others—which explains why it yearns for it in others, or why, as in the case of Pierre's little brother, it can only define itself in terms of others. "I cannot forget the voice of one little four-year-old boy," writes Daltroff-Baticie, "repeating over and over in a grave, monotone voice, a voice too grave for his small body, 'Maman, I'm going to be afraid, Maman, I'm going to be afraid.'" Or, as Julie Crémieux-Dunand, another eyewitness in Klarsfeld's book, remembers: "These small beings, whose mothers or parents had been deported a few days earlier, implored us to lead them to their Maman. A few of them, a little older, or more intuitive, already skeptical, told us that they knew they would never see her again. We saw a small boy of eight throw himself on his little sister, take her in his arms and cry out, 'Don't let them take her away from me, she's all I have left....'"

On August 24, 1942, Convoy 23 left Drancy for Auschwitz. Scarcely two days later, its passengers were gassed and burned. It is not clear whether Pierre's brother was on that train. Among the names on that convoy is passenger No. 146, the 80th on a deportation list that was obtained by the Contemporary Jewish Documentation Center after the liberation of Paris. Deportee Number 146, like deportee Number 122 on that same convoy, is simply listed as "*un enfant sans identité*." Of the 11,402 children deported, perhaps 300 survived. In all, 75,700 Jews were deported from France. 2,564 returned. An organization was created in 1943 to document the persecution of the Jews of France. But deportation lists were jealously guarded and never released to Jewish organizations. Thus Klarsfeld.

French Children of the Holocaust is longer than the Manhattan Yellow Pages—it is 1,881 pages, to be exact. It is, according to its subtitle, *A Memorial*. As in English, the French title, "*Mémorial des enfants Juifs déportés de France*," indicates the purpose of the book clearly enough: to memorialize, to preserve the memory of children who died in the Holocaust. But the two titles mean different things. In English, the title suggests that the children being commemorated in this volume were French: "French Children...." In the French, the title suggests that they were not necessarily French; they were simply deported from France.

This is not an insignificant detail. Many of the children mentioned in Klarsfeld's book were born outside France. (Klarsfeld is himself a Romanian Jew.) The Vichy regime, moreover, while not unwilling to hand over to the Nazis Jews who had immigrated to France and were stripped of their recently-acquired citizenship, was quite eager to protect French Jews. Even Laval and Pétain insisted on differentiating between French Jews and foreign Jews, so as to protect their own nationals. (The distinction was frequently obscured, either intentionally, so as to fulfill the German monthly quota of Jewish deportees, or through incompetence.)

But finally this is a minor point in a unique book. On the surface, Klarsfeld's *French Children of the Holocaust* provides a history of the war that Hitler and his eager French acolytes waged against Jewish children (and their parents) living in France. All the most terrible moments of the French Holocaust are touched on: the infamous herding of Jews into the Vélodrome d'Hiver, where they were penned under abominable conditions; the ineffectual protest of Catholic cardinals, whose prelates did not even take up the matter at their pulpits; the excruciating tale of Jewish parents who were willing never to see their children again rather than lead the authorities to their hiding places. We read also of the last-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minute cruelty meted out to the 12-year-old Kohn boy by the escaping Aloïs Brunner a week before the liberation of Paris—the same Aloïs Brunner who was head of a special commando unit sent by Eichmann to help arrest Jews, the commandant of Drancy who was given asylum and a comfortable life in Syria and was never brought to justice. Most affecting of all, perhaps, are the letters of parents hastily admonishing their children to be good, or the letters of the children who miss their parents or ask for parcels—the older ones, like their parents, already writing with the understanding that they would never see each other again.

Finally, though, this book is not about history. It is about memory—"a reference work in the domain of memory and feeling," as Klarsfeld writes. Klarsfeld is a historian, a prosecutor, and a Nazi hunter who, after 40 years, succeeded in bringing Klaus Barbie to justice; and he has produced something more humble than history, and yet more painstakingly researched, and more devastating. He has done so by giving a face to these innocents. The photographs of 2,500 murdered children are reproduced in this volume. There are 1,400 pages of these photographs. It took Klarsfeld more than 20 years to find names for children who died nameless, and to put faces to names that were nothing more than names. And the search is not over: pictures and leads are forever trickling in.

This is how Klarsfeld memorializes the children. First, he lists the names of all those who perished, broken down by convoy number and date of departure. Thus, for example, Convoy 23 departed from Drancy on August 24, 1942. Next to each full name is the child's date of birth, his or her last known address, and the assembly point (frequently Pithiviers, Drancy, or Beaune-la-Rolande) from which he or she was sent to his or her fate. Most of the children in Convoy 23 were born in Paris; but none of those in Convoy 15, which had left Beaune-la-Rolande three weeks earlier, on August 5, 1942, were born in France. In all, France shipped out 86 convoys.

Following the breakdown of names by convoy there is a 40-page description of "Convoy Histories." To stay with the same Convoy 23, we read that this is the fourth of the "large convoys of children deported with adults who were not their parents.... There were two children without identity and too young to identify themselves. The youngest known child on this convoy, Salomon Brokman, was 9 months old." Then the names are further broken down by cars and by assembly point. Among those deportees in Car 3 who had come to Drancy from Beaune-la-Rolande, we read: "Car 3—6 children. There were four Miller siblings, Rebecca (16), Henri (14), Liliane (7), and Claude (4); and Myriam (10) and Estera (8) Szejer." Car 13, however, has no names. We only know that 48 children and 3 mothers occupied it. In Car 3 of the same convoy were other deportees originating from the camp at Pithiviers: "Car 3—42 children and 9 women. Among them were three Brotkiewicz sisters, Sarah (14), Flora (12), and Marcelle (6); Moyses (13), Paulette (9), and Marcus (7) Elephant; Robert Steinmuller (11) and his brother and sister, twins Robert [elsewhere in the lists he is called Roger] and Suzie (5)." There were also three (elsewhere they are said to be two) Boksermans, two Wolinskis, two Frydmans, two Sniadowskis, two Birmans, and two Schwartzsteins.

According to the Convoy lists, the Wolinski sisters lived at 86 Faubourg St. Denis in Paris. Eva Wolinska was born in Poland in 1929; Paulette Wolinska was born in Paris in 1933. The same goes for the Sniadowski siblings. They lived at 4 Passage des Marais. Gita was born in 1933 in Warsaw, while Daniel was born five years later in Paris. Both the Wolinskis and the Sniadowskis lived in the 10th arrondissement, four to five blocks away from one another. As it turned out, they rode in the very same wagon. And aside from passengers from the Beaune-la-Rolande and Pithiviers camps, there were also last-minute additions to Convoy 23. Among them, once again, are children Nos. 146 and 182 (elsewhere designated as No. 122).

FLORA BROTKIEWICZ, AGE 12

Courtesy New York University Press

The reason why so many children were traveling with so few adults is not insignificant to Klarsfeld's book. We learn from his preface that the authorities had determined that it was easier to separate the parents from their children than to ship them all together. The Laval administration, urging more "humanitarian" measures, had advised against this separation, deeming it would be less traumatic if the children were allowed to travel with their mothers. In fact, and as though to prove Laval correct, once the parents were transported across Europe, the children automatically fell into the hands of the French state. They would soon become a burden, tasking police and social welfare organizations. Therefore the children, too, had to be "reunited" with their parents—a promise that had originally kept the children under toe, and cleared the conscience of the French police, which had used undue brutality against Jewish mothers when separating them from their children. But it would have looked terrible for French and German railway workers to see all these children traveling by themselves in boxcars, and so it was suggested that they leave Drancy accompanied by adults, to give the appearance that the children and their parents were traveling *en famille* to "Jewish reserves."

Klarsfeld's most powerful pages are not his 400 pages of text, most of them a catalog of names and convoys. They are the photographs and the one-sentence histories of each child. Faces that look no different from those of one's own aunts and uncles when they were young; other faces that look similar to one's own; and then—here lies the insidious poignancy of any book on the Holocaust—the face that bears a horrifying resemblance to one's own child. The purpose of these pictures could not be clearer: to take

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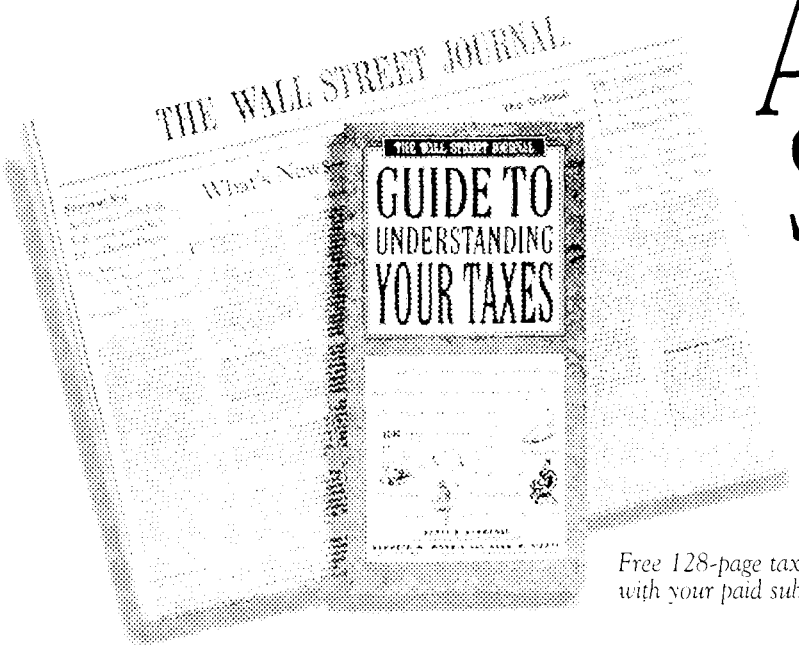

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back from death what death nearly obliterated. "This book is born of my obsession that these children will not be forgotten," Klarsfeld writes. This book is a late and decisive victory over the Nazi enterprise, which was not only to exterminate the Jewish people but also to eradicate all evidence of their extermination. Klarsfeld, you might say, plays the Holocaust in reverse, marshaling the same obsession for lists and addresses that was the hallmark of the Nazi mind, tracking down Jewish names and faces with the meticulous, unyielding thoroughness of the Franco-German's obstinate hunt for Jews.

As Orpheus discovered, death may sometimes yield, but only to inflict greater sorrow. After combing through the lists and the cross-indices in Klarsfeld's book and poring over the names of Convoy 23, I looked for pictures of the children in Car 3. As it turned out, the Wolinski sisters, the Miller, Elephant, and Bokserman siblings, the Steinmuller twins, the Frydmans, and Sniadowskis—none of their pictures were to be found. For these children, there are no faces. Luckily, however, I found something: the face of Flora Brotkiewicz, who was 12. I stared at her face the way you stare at a child when you are grateful to have any child after coming close to having none. She is biting her lower lip, her mischievous, smiling eyes sparkling with intense joy and spirited intelligence. This is the face that boarded Car Number 3 of Convoy Number 23 at Drancy on August 24, 1942, 55 years ago. By then it would almost certainly have lost its glint of wit and good cheer.

Flora's face, it occurs to me, lies at the very heart of this endless, tedious, dreary 300-page litany of names—lists that no one reads, lists that are almost without meaning, lists that are no more interesting than a phone book—unless, of course, one is looking for something or for someone. As with Claude Lanzmann's tireless shots of arriving trains at Auschwitz, the effect of Klarsfeld's children's portraits is cumulatively numbing, until a word, or the spark of something in a child's eye, or a fugitive, insignificant detail, such as the fold of Flora's lip when she smiles, suddenly reminds one that there used to be life here. Flora's face is of no interest, until you see the shadow of death staring back at you.

II.

The Holocaust aesthetic, if one may speak of such a thing, moves our sensibilities not through horror, or fear, or pity. Those are the emotions that are evoked by these terrible events, of course; but it is *how* they are evoked that matters. Unlike, say, Steven Spielberg, Serge Klarsfeld relies on an avalanche of documentation, not only because he is obsessed with the retrieval of historiographic details—the most accurate records, the most reliable address, the most faithful photographs—but because he works, like Claude Lanzmann, from the unstated premise that real horror can only be grasped obliquely. The shriek of children does not make the Holocaust more real. Spielberg and the other melodramatists of the subject do not grasp that not hearing a shriek, or not hearing a gunshot, can leave one far more horrified; and horror itself is but one in a spectrum of sensations. In Klarsfeld and Lanzmann, as in the lists of 2,000 dormant accounts published worldwide by the Swiss banks, the effect is not to help us "visualize" the catastrophe, or to "identify" with its victims, but to do something higher and more difficult: *to rememorate.*

This demands discipline. Many novels and memoirs written about the Holocaust become literary successes even if they happen to be thoroughly unbelievable and sometimes quite bad. To say that surviving the Holocaust is an incredible feat should not mean that memoirs and novels about survival have to be incredible, too. Tadeusz Borowski's *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen* records the horror with shattering understatement. It numbs its readers first, the better to shock them when the horror comes. This not only works aesthetically, it also happens to reflect the author's own encounter with the Holocaust: he, too, never saw it coming until it hit him in the face.

The dispassionate eyewitness who does not rave against the atrocities, the clear-eyed chronicler whose flat, level-headed prose never whines under the strain of human suffering: this was, supremely, Primo Levi, the master memorialist of the Holocaust. By describing soulless minutiae—a ladleful of soup, a missing button on an inmate's uniform, a blister brought on by an uncomfortable clog—Levi was able to convey the proximity of death and, by implication, the horror of the camps. His vision is totally dissociative. It is not unfeeling, but it turns the poker face into a method of feeling and understanding. It refuses to emote, because emoting is an inadequate response to such an enormity.

It is the roundabout, oblique path to the horror that must be trod; and in this respect Binjamin Wilkomirski's *Fragments* will no doubt leave its mark on the literature of the Holocaust. *Fragments* may as well have been written by Pierre's younger brother. Like Pierre's younger brother, Binjamin Wilkomirski did not know his name—or had forgotten it in the death camp of Majdanek, in Poland. He discovered it, or acquired it, toward the end of his internment, when another inmate of the camp who must have known his parents caught sight of him and insisted on calling him Binjamin Wilkomirski. He does not remember his mother. He does not know what a mother is. Nor does he have a sufficient picture of his father. Everything is shot through with maybes. "Maybe my father." "My brothers, maybe."

Binjamin Wilkomirski was probably not yet three years old when the Holocaust came into his life. (A makeshift birth-certificate puts his birth on February 12, 1941.) His book is written from a child's perspective: and so we are told that the soldiers who descended on his family are Latvian militiamen, but all that the frightened boy really knows is their boots, their fists, their screams, the whole frightful confusion. The Holocaust is entirely "defamiliarized" and filtered through the baffled eyes of young Binjamin. The narrator never tells us that the "gray black monster with a round lid that was standing open" is a tank, or that the helmet-looking construction with "the gaping jawbone with filthy brown teeth" is the maw of the crematorium, where "cars [full of dead people] ... cycled uphill, disappearing ... then cycled back down again, empty."

All we know about the soldiers and the guards in this book is that they are wearing gray uniforms. It is we who must supply the missing parts to Binjamin's "fragments," we who must cobble the scattered pieces together and make sense, say, of the uniformed lady who promises to reunite little Binjamin with his family but grips his wrist a bit too harshly for someone who means well; we who must see in the quivering lip of the guard allegedly having good clean fun with the Jewish boys in the camp that he is about to kill one of them; we who must read in the boy's reflex to cover his head and his stomach that he is already far too used to being beaten.

The information provided by the little boy is sketchy, inadequate, and frequently misleading; it is the lag between uncertainty and recognition that gives this little book its large power. Incomplete or mistaken readings of reality, accompanied by rude, painful awakenings: these are the structures of Wilkomirski's aesthetic vision. (The boy learns what a whip is by the quick way in which "something whizzed across [his] face with such burning heat that [he] thought [he]'d been cut in two.") The

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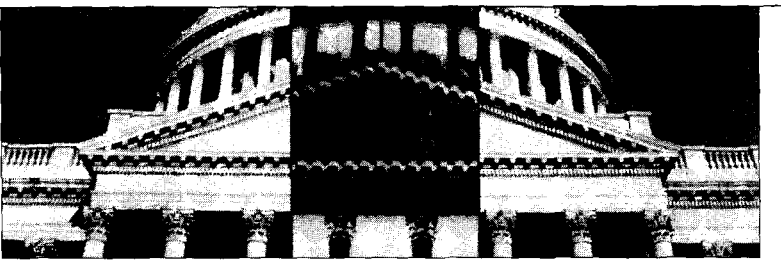
boy never sees complete human beings. He catches segments of them only; perhaps he cannot afford to see or to remember more. One could attribute this to the writer's desire to describe the events of the Holocaust purely from a child's perspective—an old trick by now; but the fragmentary nature of Binjamin's account is not so much a product of the grown man's style as it is a product of the young boy's experience. Life, and not merely sensibility, was dissociated.

Only connect? In a universe of extremity, Forster's slogan turns out to be shamefully naïve. "Nothing connects to anything else anymore. Nothing is in its right place." The crushed skulls oozing a yellowish fluid. The boy hurled to the dogs. The insertion of sticks into little boys' penises. The compulsion to withhold bodily functions all night long, under peril of death. The two starving babies who, having been brought into the barracks with frozen black hands, die in their sleep after chewing their insensate fingers down to their white bones. And when you bleed, no one feels sorry for you. Clean it up, or else.... Yet a part of the trauma also lies in the inability to come up with an explanation for such a world. How can the mind think in a universe for which there is no intelligent life beyond the barbed wire? ("This is where the world stops being a world at all." "That's where the world ends, there's nowhere further to go." "...the world outside the fence had disappeared.") Can reason accommodate itself to day-to-day madness without becoming mad?

Yet how can the world make sense if the young boy cannot tell whether he is in the barracks or in an orphanage, or if he cannot tell a teacher from a block warden, or the social worker in charge of taking him away after the war from the woman who had forcibly brought him to the camp at the beginning of the war? Worse yet, if the boy cannot make head or tail of the barracks, he cannot begin to penetrate the world into which he has been thrust after the war. For all he knows, there never was a war, or there was always a war, or there will always be a war. Be cunning. Eat all you can. Watch out for the rats. Their bite is lethal.

The boy is so thoroughly confused that, long after the ordeal, he still thinks that Switzerland's national hero William Tell is some malevolent ghoul who rather enjoys missing the apple. Such errors are not just commonplace in *Fragments*; they lie at the core of its vision. Shards are units of thought in Wilkomirski. When, after the war, the young boy panics upon finding his shoes missing and proceeds to wrap his feet in rags, as was the custom in the death camps, the public jeering that he receives not only humiliates him, it also reminds him of the unbridgeable gulf that stands between citizens of an ordinary society and inmates of a society gone crazy. On finding himself alone one evening, little Binjamin, who used to roam the streets before being adopted, does the most natural thing in the world: he plops himself somewhere and starts to beg. His foster-parents are outraged; but how does one become a naturalized citizen of one world when one's soul is forever wrapped in another world?

At some point after the war, when he first arrives at an orphanage, Binjamin spots an empty table on which linger the remains of a meal. He cannot believe his luck. "The [other] children hadn't eaten everything on their plates! They'd left bits in strips around the edges. These leftovers were all over everywhere, and apparently nobody was guarding them." Binjamin hides under the table and, "behind the protection of the cloth and by reaching out just one arm, began to feel around on top to where the plates were, and ... collected the leftover strips. I put as many as I could into my mouth and ... my pockets." Caught by one of the attendants at the orphanage, the child naturally freezes, tries to escape,



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and is caught again. To his mind, they are hardly kinder at the orphanage than they were in the death camps. Everyone is very annoyed with him for stealing food from the table. He is stunned and embarrassed, as he was when he wrapped the rags around his feet or made that terrible *faux pas* about Switzerland's national hero.

But suddenly a new fact slaps him on the face. The delicious strips he'd been savoring were nothing more than cheese rinds. Binjamin is so confused, he cannot tell whether the attendant is angry or disgusted. Finally one of the attendants takes away the rinds.

> Maybe the strips belong to her? Does she want to take them back, so she can eat them herself? . . .
>
> They were taking my food away, but not because they wanted it themselves. They didn't seem to be hungry. No, they were just throwing food away right in front of my eyes. Was this how they wanted to punish me?. . .
>
> . . . Perhaps it's not just the food, perhaps they're going to take my clothes too. It's winter. Perhaps they're going to leave me here to starve. . . .
>
> Oddly, they didn't punish me. . . . And that was what was so unsettling. What were they planning?. . .
>
> They all seem to know something I don't know. Why am I always the only one who doesn't understand? Why doesn't someone tell me? Where are they all going? I don't have anywhere to go, I'm hungry and I'm freezing cold. . . .
>
> They're trying to trick me. That's why they want me to forget what I know. . . . The camp's still there, they just hid it. They'll bring it out if I don't obey them.

Wilkomirski's tale is a patchwork of disconnected swatches, freely associated, braided and twisting in and out of past and present. In a world where one is as disconnected from everything and everyone as from oneself, where all bonds, all loyalties, and all love is gone, there can be no passage between things or between people. You blank out from lack of sleep, from pain, sorrow, rage, horror, exhaustion. But the same can be said of Wilkomirski's prose: at the end of every segment, things just blank out, and episodes begin as abruptly as they end. Mind and memory share the same bed; but they seldom speak. After the nightmare, they turn and stare at opposite walls.

What makes Wilkomirski so different from other Holocaust writers is not the poignancy of the details—all Holocaust survivors have moments that rip your heart up—but the way in which these details loop and jag into each other, playing out the fundamental discontinuities that define his life and the manner in which it is chronicled. Memory is a mass of tectonic plates constantly shifting underground, like a bad dream unable to work out its demons. The little boy who had seen a furry rat dart out of a wound on a dead woman's belly thinks that women give birth to rats as well. "Am I a rat or a human?" he asks. Years later, when watching his wife give birth to their child, the first thing that Binjamin sees coming out of her womb is the baby's head. To his horror, it was furry. And for a moment the world of the camps is upon him again. "Children without identity," as Wilkomirski calls his kind. Man, rat: which is he indeed? No one else would think of asking such a question. But if you ask it, then everything else—knowledge, self, love, memory, sleep, hope, speech—are shaky, too. "I have no mother tongue, nor a father tongue either . . . the languages I learned later on were never mine. . . . They were only imitations of other people's speech." *Fragments* is not only about the catastrophe; it is also about the confusion of the catastrophe with the whole of reality.

One day, when he is about ten, Binjamin meets a girl. They don't know one another, but "all of a sudden I knew; these eyes knew it all, they'd seen everything mine had." Together they watch as the other children at a resort are being attached to ski lifts and taken up the hill to a house. Moments later the lifts return downhill, minus their passengers. Binjamin can think of only one thing, and suddenly "the gaping jawbone with filthy brown teeth" comes back to him. The Death Machine. Both he and the girl know the end has come. And, as though obeying old, instinctive, ritual gestures learned lifetimes ago, together they throw themselves on the snow and await the blow that must finish them off. The Holocaust (as the people in W.G. Sebald's *The Emigrants* also know) has caught up with them. "Both of us were living among the living, yet we really didn't belong with them—we were actually the dead, on stolen leave, accidental survivors who got left behind in life." This passage comes from another moment in Wilkomirski's memoir, but it might as well apply to the two children lying on the snow awaiting their end. The Holocaust never goes away. It is the bullet you carry in the spine. Every once in a while, every day, every hour perhaps, there's a little twitch. It is the sign that you are still alive.

"Binjamin Wilkomirski lives in Switzerland," says the jacket of his book, "where he is a concert musician and instrument maker." But life cannot let things alone, and the wheels that seemed to have spun themselves out suddenly take an extra turn. That, after all, is what is typical of cataclysms: they reach out from the past. The dust never settles; the ledgers never close. Just when it seemed that Wilkomirski's tale has reached its end, something new stirs, tugging with renewed sadness, reminding us that the cruelest thing, after an unhappy end, is a happy end that comes too late. This conclusion, if it is a conclusion, is typical of Holocaust tales, and perhaps it should be quoted in full. What follows is an article by Dan Perry that appeared on April 22, 1995 in the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*. (It is translated from the German by Martin Ostwald, himself a refugee from Hitler's Germany who lost his parents in the camps.)

> The story of the suffering of a Jewish family has taken a happy turn after more than 50 years. Yaakov Morocco, who lives in Israel, was reunited with his son, from whom he had been separated in 1943 in the concentration camp Majdanek in Poland. A relative saw the 54-year-old clarinetist Bruno Wilkomirski of Zurich, in whom she believed to recognize Morocco's son, in a TV documentary. Wilkomirski, too, had for decades been seeking his family.
>
> The story begins two months ago. At that time the orthodox Jew Morocco was inexplicably seized by the desire to telephone the sister of his first wife after more than 30 years. She told him that she had seen his son in a TV program about survivors of the Holocaust: 'When I looked at his childhood picture, I was convinced it was he. I telephoned him in Switzerland, and he broke into tears,' the 73-year-old man reported, who still calls his son Benjamin. Blood tests and DNA tests of both men yielded no decisive result, but no negative result, either. After both Morocco and Wilkomirski had been independently interviewed by rabbis, their relationship was definitively established.
>
> "I still see in my mind, how my father was taken away in the direction of the gas chambers," said Wilkomirski. His father stated that he had survived only through a lucky chance, and believed that his wife and son had been killed. Wilkomirski confirmed his belief that his mother did not survive the camp, and that he himself had come to Switzerland after the war and had been raised as a Christian by a family; all these years he had searched in archives for photos and pictures of his real family.
>
> Father and son were reunited this week in Tel Aviv, where Morocco lives. They embraced each other tearfully. They spent their first day together in Yad Binyamin in southern Israel. There the long-haired musician in his western garb, who describes himself as a secularized Jew, met dozens of relatives, the majority of whom are strictly orthodox. Although he is divorced and the father of three children, he wants to remain in Switzerland. The father, Yaakov, said he would not pressure his son to change his lifestyle.
>
> Let us wonder in silence how each must have gauged the price of order restored, justice served, and lives misspent.

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III.

This extraordinary conclusion to Binjamin Wilkomirski's story reverberates historically. It brings to mind what still remains the most sensationalized chronicle of a Jewish boy's suffering. I am referring to Edgardo Mortara, the Jewish boy who was abducted by the Pope's police in 1858. In the case of this poor boy, identity was thoroughly scraped and extirpated, brainwashed away as only the church knows how. The harrowing tale begins at nightfall, on June 23, 1858, in the city of Bologna, when a squad of policemen entered the home of the Jew Solomon Mortara with orders to remove his 6-year-old son Edgardo. To their mind, as to that of the Inquisitor and, ultimately, of the Pope, the reason could not have been simpler: the boy's nanny had sprinkled some water on him when his parents were not looking.

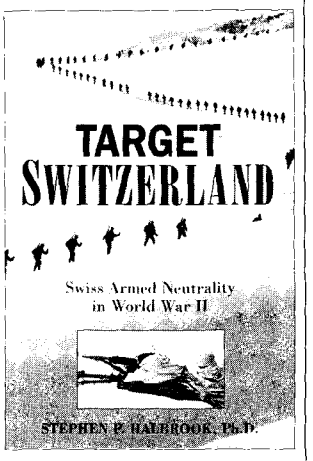
One would think that a baptism performed by a maid on a sleeping child would mean next to nothing in a world that had put the Middle Ages behind it. And this was 1858, one year before *The Origin of Species* was published. But Bologna, ruled by the Pope, was not yet in the modern world. Italy was not yet a nation-state. The Italian peninsula consisted of a patchwork of small states, duchies, and monarchies, with parts still under Austrian dominion. One of the last states to stand in the way of Italian unification were the Papal States, which extended all the way from Rome to the Adriatic Sea and were ruled, as David Kertzer makes abundantly clear in his splendid book, at the pleasure of the Pope. It was the Papal police that knocked at the door of the Mortaras and forced them to give up their little boy. Twenty-four hours later, he was whisked away to Rome. The church, it turns out, not only considered the maid's rudimentary baptism valid, it had actually encouraged it. Their little new Christian could not be allowed to grow up in a Jewish home, where he ran the risk of relapsing into his ancestral faith, a crime about which the Church took a grim view. Hence the "legal" kidnapping.

Kertzer, an anthropologist who teaches at Brown University, does a wonderful job of detailing the agony of the Mortara parents and their seven children: the shrieks of the mother who was beside herself, the pleading of relatives, the neighbors gathered to watch the removal of the child, even the sorrow of the marshal who had come to do the ugly deed and who admitted, much later, that he would rather have faced real dangers than go through this grueling

The first book in English to provide the year-by-year military history of how a small democracy stood alone in Nazi-held Europe . . .

TARGET SWITZERLAND

Swiss Armed Neutrality in World War II



By STEPHEN P. HALBROOK, Ph.D.

The revising of history by politicians and special interests can be a fascinating spectacle. In 1997, Sen. Alfonse D'Amato led the charge to cut through all the irrelevant details of WWII, such as 48 million deaths, countless maimed and homeless, entire cities destroyed and countries ravaged, to focus on the crux of the matter: bank accounts. Over half a century after WWII we are being led to believe that "the Swiss" should be considered the villains of the war.

This book does not dwell on the issue of dormant bank accounts. In the October 30, 1997 *New York Times*, Stuart Eizenstat said: "I think [the Swiss] have made extraordinary progress in the last year, more than any other neutral country. They have pursued this in a very courageous way." Left unsaid is how, for example, the American banking industry would fare if asked to track every bank account ever opened in its branches in the past 60 years.

Indeed, this meticulously researched book makes no sensational, revisionist claims. It simply describes the wartime history of a small democracy surrounded by totalitarian aggressors—a dramatic true story that the American public has forgotten, or perhaps has never fully known.

Stephen Halbrook begins with the founding of the Swiss democracy in 1291, briefly examining Switzerland's warrior tradition and the evolution of its stance of armed neutrality. By 1939 its citizens army—not unlike that of present-day Israel—had the largest per capita pool of trained riflemen in Europe. While Norway, for example, mustered 13,000 troops against invasion, Switzerland could mobilize 650,000 trained shooters in two days. Switzerland not only possessed Europe's oldest democratic system and its best-trained citizens army, the country's terrain also argued against a Nazi aggression. The Germans repeatedly drew up elaborate plans for conquest, but each time decided that an attack wouldn't have been worth the cost in blood.

Switzerland's maintaining its freedom in a sea of twisted crosses makes for a gripping story, however this book also examines the specific questions:

- Did the Swiss do enough to save refugees from the Holocaust?
- Why did the Swiss trade with the Axis powers?
- What was the Swiss attitude toward Nazi Germany, and vice versa?
- If the Germans hadn't attacked the Soviet Union, would Switzerland have had a prayer?
- When Italy became a German-occupied theater of war, why did the Nazis still hold back from trying to seize the Alpine transit routes?
- What arguments took place between the Allies and the Swiss after 1945?

Target Switzerland is not necessarily a must-read for people hoping to find a dormant bank account. It's essential, however, for students of WWII and modern European history.

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Contemporaries and Ancestors

Sure, some words were spelled differently,
And the clothes and customs weren't the same.
Maybe some of the pets were different too
—The polecat-ferret, the parakeet—
Yet behind the blizzard of appearance
From whence those first impressions came
There was always something constant, and shared.
The stars came out at night, the pale moon rose
To a plaintive melody of care, and what was meant by
Virtue had the virtue of a name
—"Aromatic rose spurred by illusion"—
Like an extended sonnet, whose turn
Seems inexplicable now. I pull them to myself,
That where was once unfurled a glittering display
Of language written like the stars,
A small and truer semblance might unfold.
Let brilliance fall from my consideration,
That the fragrance of some long-forgotten air
Might seize me with a sudden rush, as from a thicket
Birds erupt, and startle through the air,
And vanish in the bright confusion of their cries.
And let the cloak of anonymity descend
Over my heart, upon that bordered, public space
Wherein the figure of the human soul awaits
And in its waiting flourishes and dies, O bear me
From these visions of our common suffering!

—But the answer is a pond
In which one's face is barely visible.
The sullen clouds hang low above the trees.
The fields stand as empty as the skies.
Something marvelous is gone—
The intonations of a different form of life
That beckoned from the pages of a prayer book
And the cadences of hymns one heard a century ago.
It was a stronger mode of feeling,
A stranger way of being in the world
That vanished for the sake of an appearance,
A garland of forget-me-nots. Things fall away,
And fall away so quickly. Think of the Ink Spots—
"Whispering Grass" was almost sixty years ago,
But to me it's still a song in high school.
Whitman died *how* many years before my father's birth?
Eighteen? And Tennyson? There was a common grace,
Sustained by the illusion of a common good,
That shook the souls of fools and geniuses alike.
And though I realize that none of this is true,
The motives seem ingenuous enough:
To place an incoherent dream of aspiration
In the context of an argument I thought I'd understood—
As though the reasoning I'd sought lay dormant
In the dark recesses of some half-forgotten books,
Whose premises were residues of feeling
Tracing out the movements of the intricate
Detritus of a spent imagination, until the clouds lift,
And the sunlight filters through the thin Venetian blinds,
And narrows to this small, irreferential space.

JOHN KOETHE

"theater of tears." And the marshal was not the only one moved.

The kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara managed to stir up public opinion, the international press, and writers and playwrights worldwide. The international Jewish association known as the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* was created as a response to this outrage. All sorts of high-ranking personages brought pressure to bear, from Sir Moses Montefiore, whose loans were scarcely unwelcome to the Pope, to Napoleon III, whose soldiers were stationed in Rome to protect the Pope. But the Pope would not budge. Nothing could persuade him to release the boy.

For all his innovative ideas at the start of his papacy, Pius IX is known today as one of the most retrograde pontiffs of the century, a petty man cloaking deceit behind piety and self-pity. That the papacy declared itself infallible at around this time is a measure of how obstinate and beleaguered was the priest at the helm. It had come as a shock to him that the Christian world did in fact care about a 6-year-old Jew, or that Jews should presume to complain of an injustice, or that, when arguing their case, Jews should know something about Christian dogma and the doctors of the Church. But the Mortaras never got Edgardo back. When they finally met him eleven years later, the young man was so thoroughly estranged from them that he escaped and became a monk. He took the name Pio Edgardo, after Pius IX.

"Could the story of an illiterate servant girl, a grocer, and a little Jewish child from Bologna have altered the course of Italian and Church history? The question is not nearly as far-fetched as it appears." Kertzer exaggerates. The Mortara case eventually helped to bring about the collapse of the Pope's worldly power; but it did not quite alter history. But this is a minor blemish in a very fine book. Kertzer skillfully weaves the personal and the historical. He knows that the interpretation of these events depends on which narrative one chooses to heed: the Jewish narrative, which tells of anti-Semitism, forced conversion, compulsory church attendance, kidnapping, injustice, and cruelty; or the Christian narrative, which dotes on the beatific conversion of the boy, his pleas not to be allowed to relapse, the ease with which he learned Christian prayers, and so on. (It does not help the cause of historical understanding that the Vatican has not been forthcoming with its documents, and the central archives of the Inquisition remain closed.)

Both religions ended up being embar-

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rassed by the Mortara affair, or wished to place it behind them: the abducted Jewish boy finally reneged on his heritage and became a devout Christian, and the Christian Inquisitor was ultimately brought to justice for plotting that very kidnapping. The Inquisitor was eventually found not guilty. He explained that he was merely "following orders," words that the courts of Europe would hear repeated less than a century later. As for the Mortaras, they were brought to trial a few years later for murdering their maid. After seven months in jail, Solomon Mortara and another of his sons were found not guilty, but a month after the acquittal the old man died.

And Pio Edgardo? About him we are told little. Kertzer never mentions that Pio Edgardo traveled to New York, for example. What did he do in New York? He died in Bouhay, Belgium, in 1940, at the age of 88, barely a month before the German invasion. What did he think of the Nazis? Did the rise of anti-Semitism draw him to the Jews? Or, like most Catholic clergymen in Europe, did he keep a low profile and hide behind the same papal authority that had visited a medieval fate upon his own family?

Silence, after all, is one of the oldest church policies in times of trouble: temporize, stay your ground, intimidate, allow your adversary to wear himself out. Above all, say nothing. It is a sad truth that the church knows its subjects well. People want to forget, and forgiveness allows everyone (or so we are told) to move on. Anyone can see the perverse wisdom of the Vatican's reluctance to pry open old sores half a century later: revealing to these middle-aged Catholics their Jewish roots is like telling a dying patient the truth about his wife. Why do it? Wasn't everything staked on that child's survival? And wasn't it survival, in the final hour, that drove the mother to forfeit her child, the way another mother did in King Solomon's court?

The irony is that, after half a century, informing such a person about his Jewish origins would not change a thing. It would only offend memory. Tell a devout Catholic that his parents were Jewish and he might simply utter a Christian prayer for them, spend a few restless nights, and finally toss the whole thing off like a piece of idle gossip that he might pass on to his children almost for laughs, the way so many devout Catholics in Spain boast today, not without a smile, that there are one or two Jews in their family tree. In the decades after the Holocaust, remember, an entire generation of children was told a big lie, raised in different homes, with new parents, assumed names, never told anything—and the whole sinister thing worked.

The point of all this is not just that the Vatican is heartless, or that fate is an ugly business, or that Jewish children were lured over to the "enemy" camp, though some might see it that way. The point of all this is that there are certain things that revolt us absolutely when they happen to children. Dare we say that a child who was torn from his parents, and then tortured, beaten, terrorized, and nearly killed, should never have been born? No, we dare not. But the magnitude of these tragedies is impossible to measure. I keep thinking of Pierre's brother, of the little boy who knew his brother's name but not his own. I catch myself hoping, absurdly, that he survived what the Nazis had in store for him. But if he did survive, if he is alive today, he might not know that he was born a Jew. He will have lived, but he will have been erased. And that, too, will have been a crime. •

The Ego and the Ibid

By G.W. Bowersock

The Footnote: A Curious History by Anthony Grafton

(Harvard University Press, 241 pp., $22.95)

Footnotes tend to elicit yawns or giggles. Either they bore the reader with more information and references than anyone could desire, or they titillate through veiled polemic or elegantly phrased indiscretion. The journalistic press, including this magazine, prefers to avoid footnotes altogether. Even academic publishers, who have long served as hosts for this peculiar intellectual virus, do their best nowadays to talk their authors into endnotes. In the Anglophone world, the footnote is generally regarded as a Teutonic habit that invaded the halls of academe along with the doctoral degree, and the pedigree of the drab compilation of references in tiny print at the bottom of a page is quite rightly associated with the importation of graduate education. But the artistic, elegant, and witty note is another matter, and in this genre English literature takes pride of place with the annotations that Edward Gibbon placed in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Gibbon was fully aware of the insidious counterpoint that his notes provided for his running narrative, as can be seen by his deliberate shift from endnotes in his first volume to footnotes in the five volumes that followed.

So footnotes come in at least two different forms. But the wit of a Gibbonian note and the absurdity of an overstuffed, solemn academic note are often alike in both provoking a grin, one by being funny and the other by being ridiculous. This is presumably why most people who have written about footnotes cannot resist parodying their subject, such as the author of the little brochure distributed as a Christmas greeting by a German publisher in 1983 with the title *Vorstudien zu einer Theorie der Fussnote*, or *Preliminary Studies for a Theory of the Footnote*.

Anthony Grafton's book on the footnote appears to have begun in a similar spirit. Although written originally in English, it first appeared in print in a German version under the title *Die tragischen Ursprünge der deutschen Fussnote*, or *The Tragic Origins of the German Footnote*. In the French edition, the footnote lost its Germanness: *Les Origines tragiques de l'érudition: Une histoire de la note en bas de page*, or *The Tragic Origins of Learning: A History of the Footnote*. Now in the English edition we see that the footnote has lost not only its Germanness, but its tragic origins as well: *The Footnote: A Curious History*. One supposes that the new adjective "curious" is meant to suggest something quaint ("curiously refreshing") or vaguely eighteenth-century. This would appear to be yet another way of implying that the subject is essentially silly. But what about those tragic origins of the German footnote? Did Grafton mean anything by the title of the first publication of this work, or was it all just a good-humored joke?

Grafton has had a serious interest in this subject for a long time, and he is far too good a historian to offer his readers an exercise in frivolity. His fundamental interest is in the documentation of historical narrative and analysis, not in the Gibbonian work of art. His

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various titles for this volume, like his opening pages on Gibbon, reflect the droll side of his subject, but once Grafton gets down to work he writes seriously and very well about the problem of documenting history, in footnotes or not. Even Gibbon knew that his footnotes were not wholly adequate to justify his observations. When he replied to the earnest young man from Balliol College who attacked his chapters on early Christianity, he offered to prove his mastery of the field by allowing the critic to inspect his personal library on any occasion when he was not at home. The footnote serves principally to provide Grafton with a point of entry into a discursive and fascinating account of justification by documentation. There are no tragic origins. In fact, there turn out to be no origins at all. By the time he is done, Grafton has taken us all the way back to Herodotus and Thucydides.

It is always agreeable to start a book with Gibbon, since the quotations put the reader in a receptive mood. Grafton understandably cites some memorable notes from the *Decline and Fall*, such as the famous comment on Origen's self-castration: "As it was his general practice to allegorize scripture, it seems unfortunate that, in this instance only, he should have adopted the literal sense." The reader might have welcomed even a few more samples of Gibbon's matchless wit, such as the dry observation in a footnote appended to a passing reference to Hadrian and his deified beloved, Antinous: "Yet we may remark that of the first fifteen emperors Claudius was the only one whose taste in love was entirely correct." Nor is any reader of Gibbon likely to forget the comment added to a scholarly-looking citation of Procopius's original Greek recording Theodora's famous regret that nature had equipped her body with only three orifices: "She wished for a fourth altar on which she might pour libations to the god of love." More than one writer has noticed that Gibbon lived out his sex life in his footnotes.

Gibbon also used his notes to expose error and fraud with an economy of presentation that sharpened his polemic by making it memorable. He had a poor opinion of Voltaire, as we soon learn from a footnote at the end of his first chapter: "M. de Voltaire, unsupported by either fact or probability, has generously bestowed the Canary Islands on the Roman empire." Like Johnson, Gibbon was among the first to recognize Macpherson's imposture in creating, under the name of an ancient Celtic bard called Ossian, an epic poem about a Roman emperor Caricul, who was supposed to be Caracalla: "In the Caledonian war, the son of Severus was known only by the appellation of Antoninus; and it may seem strange that the Highland bard should describe him by a nickname invented four years afterwards, scarcely used by the Romans till after the death of that emperor, and seldom employed by the most ancient historians."

Grafton moves on swiftly from the delights of Gibbon to the primary characteristics of the modern academic footnote. "Nowadays," he declares by way of transition, "historians' arguments must still stride forward or totter backward on their footnotes." He might have added that nowadays scholars also still pour their prejudices and their obsessions into their footnotes. One can often see an author's personality in the writing and preparation of notes more readily than in the main text.

Grafton easily decodes the mannerisms of those many scholars who write largely for other scholars. He strips off the veil from apparently innocent assertions such as "for a different view, see..." or "*pace* so-and-so." He exposes the mortal wound that authors can inflict by deliberately not citing someone's work, and thereby conspiring to cast an unwelcome colleague into scholarly limbo. But he is perhaps too suspicious of the nearly universal use of cf. (the Latin imperative *confer*, meaning "compare"). According to Grafton, "this indicates, at least to the expert reader, both that an alternate view appears in the cited work and that it is wrong." It may indeed indicate that; but most of the time it simply allows an author to cite pertinent work without saying anything at all about it, or even without revealing whether the author has actually read it. Most cf.'s are more like an insurance policy against the criticism that something has been overlooked.

Grafton's account of subtexts in footnotes launches him into the vast nebula that swirls around the problem of objective truth in the writing of history, and this is the grand theme that occupies him for most of the remainder of the book. He pursues it in an unusual way: by working backward through time, ostensibly to discover when the footnote was born. What Grafton actually does is to track, for Western culture, the habit of justifying statements about the past. He starts with Leopold von Ranke, who perhaps acquired more worldly fame from archival scholarship than any historian that has ever lived. Ranke's notorious ambition, expressed early in his career in the preface to *Histories of the Latin and German Peoples*, a book one would hardly expect to have been a best-seller, was to give an unembellished, unprejudiced account of the past—"only to say how it really was." At the end of the twentieth century, when facts dissolve daily before our eyes, such an aim would seem hopelessly naïve. Ranke reflects a lost paradise in which historians could imagine that the evidence would speak for itself.

The evidence has to be selected, interpreted, and displayed, and at every point along the way even the best-intentioned scholar will impose subjective criteria. Footnotes can never be exhaustive, while the presentation of documents all together in an appendix or a supplement, although impressive and even useful, would often not be exhaustive either. The worst thing about this kind of ample documentation is the numbness that it induces in the reader. It is hard to hold one's own against an avalanche of footnotes or appendices. They are by nature a form of intimidation in the name of justification; and it takes a strong and independent thinker to resist their authority. Such was Gibbon, and such, more problematically in the German cultural orbit, were Friedrich Nietzsche and his senior colleague Jacob Burckhardt. It was not an accident that those two taught and wrote in Switzerland.

Quite apart from the inevitable tendentiousness of documentation, of course, there remains the undeniable utility of having references to hand. Leaving Ranke behind, Grafton moves back into the eighteenth and seventeenth centuries to uncover, with his characteristically impressive erudition, the antiquarians and the compilers who patiently sifted through the surviving records of the past to publish compendious accounts of what they found. Some, such as Sébastien Le Nain de Tillemont, have acquired a measure of posthumous honor by serving as fundamental props of Gibbon's narration of the Roman empire and the early Christian church. Gibbon's acknowledgment of his debt to this meticulous compiler was unequivocal: "I applied the collections of Tillemont, whose inimitable accuracy almost assumes the character of genius, to fix and arrange within my reach the loose and scattered atoms of historical information." When the scholar whom Gibbon elsewhere described as his "sure-footed mule" abandons him, his work takes a noticeable turn for the worse.

Grafton gives ample space as well to another of Gibbon's intellectual men-

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tors, Pierre Bayle, whose *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, first published between 1695 and 1697, became (and remains) a monument of uncontrolled antiquarian curiosity. Bayle heaped footnote upon footnote, and if he ridiculed the notion that historians could or should tell only the truth, he nonetheless insisted upon accuracy and documentation. Grafton is eloquent on the inspired irrelevance of much in Bayle's notes. We hear about a man who watched a sparrow have intercourse twenty times and then die: "O unfair lot. Is this to be granted to sparrows and denied to men?" In discussing the problems of an ancient Greek artist who wished to observe his models naked, Bayle found fault with the citation procedure of a certain scholar: "He piles up all his citations at the end of each article, and without informing us that a particular author said one thing, and a second author another. He thus gives his reader a great deal of trouble: one must sometimes knock at five or six doors before finding someone with whom one may speak." Gibbon cited Bayle 22 times, although not without impatience at his relentless foraging into trivia: "How could such a genius employ three or four pages and a great apparatus of learning to examine whether Achilles was fed with marrow only, whether it was the marrow of lions and stags, or that of lions only?" But Bayle's detailed and often intrusive notes must have instructed Gibbon well in the art of scholarly polemic.

The *Dictionnaire* and other compilatory investigations bore a close resemblance to the burgeoning genre of commentaries on classical texts, whose undifferentiated erudition filled pages of notes on relatively few lines of text. This genre took its origins from the secular, ecclesiastical, and Talmudic commentators and scholiasts of the ancient world. Servius's commentary on Virgil from the fourth century (and augmented later) is a famous representative of a style of exegesis represented in modern times by Arthur Stanley Pease's huge commentary on the fourth book of the *Aeneid* and Eduard Fraenkel's voluminous three-volume commentary on the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus, which is a play of just under 1,700 lines. Those commentators might well have found a more ample place in Grafton's pages than the passing allusion they receive.

One seventeenth-century antiquarian, the astonishing German Jesuit Athanasius Kircher, had to wait for Grafton to call the attention of the general public to the vast panorama of his achievements. This recognition comes only a few years after a German publication of 1993 that Grafton describes as the first systematic analysis of Kircher's thought. The indefatigable Kircher "wrote more books than his modern counterparts can hope to read," and his Latin text was generously (and intimidatingly) laced with citations in Greek, Arabic, Hebrew, and Aramaic. He taught mathematics when he was young, and in middle life "he excavated obelisks, explored volcanoes, and reconstructed the voyage of Noah's Ark." And in 1677 he published an illustrated work on the antiquities and marvels of China.

Among the Chinese antiquities in Kircher's work was a bilingual stele that explained, in Chinese and in Syriac, the theology and the history of the Nestorian Christians. When he first made known the existence of this stele, which seemed to him a historical document of unimpeachable and obviously extraordinary quality, he found himself attacked for promulgating "a pure invention of the Jesuits." Grafton's riveting account of the ways in which Kircher attempted to address the problem of proving the reality and worth of this document vividly illustrates the instability of historical documentation.

Kircher systematically reproduced the original reports of the first Jesuits who saw the stone. He then produced an elaborate letter from another Jesuit, who furnished an even more precise account as well as "a new and meticulous translation of the whole inscription, word by word." Most remarkable of all is Kircher's use of an *autographum* brought from China and serving as the basis for a published facsimile. As Grafton observes, the *autographum* was probably some kind of rubbing of the stone, or what experienced epigraphists normally call, to the amusement of their friends, a "squeeze." Kircher's problem was compounded by his reliance on travelers' reports rather than autopsy; but personal inspection is not always enough. Classical epigraphists even today will not have forgotten a notorious publication of an inscribed object that a British scholar saw and published as ancient. It turned out to be a modern forgery—though the scholar, undaunted, then went on to publish an article on the forger.

From ecclesiastical historians and antiquarians Grafton attempts to find his way back still further to antecedents in the ancient world. This part of his argument works less well, and he might have found a more secure link to the ancient world through the scholiastic commentaries mentioned earlier. Eusebius and Thucydides certainly were concerned with documents and with justifying what they

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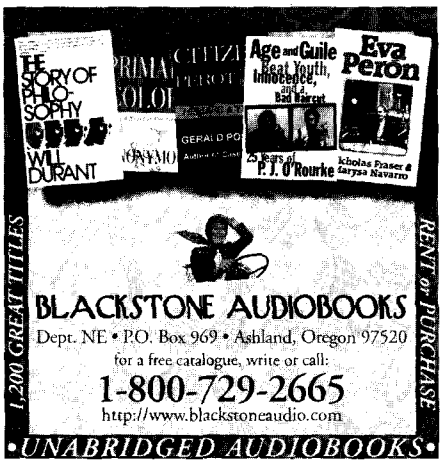
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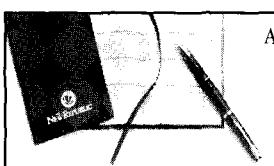

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were saying, but their manner is different from the antiquarian compilers. As Grafton recognizes, the schools of rhetoric exerted a powerful influence on historiography throughout antiquity, and the most polished practitioners generally preferred to rewrite speeches for historical figures rather than to cite their actual words. Documents, such as letters and treaties, do occasionally find a place in classical texts. (Josephus provides conspicuous examples.) Some scholars, such as Krateros, collected decrees that proved useful to Plutarch. Although Grafton says that Thucydides saw no reason to report the exact wording of treaties, the surviving text of his *History* does, in fact, include the verbatim text of a treaty. This occurs in what appears to be an unfinished segment of the work, and it is entirely possible that Thucydides would ultimately have eliminated the exact text and paraphrased it. But it is still there today.

What the ancients were doing cannot be regarded, except in the most general terms, as a prefiguration of modern documentary methods, to say nothing of footnotes. Nor does it have much to do with seventeenth- and eighteenth-century antiquarianism, such as Kircher's stele or Bayle's dictionary. But the theme of historical documentation that runs through all these disparate topics is nevertheless a real one, and it binds Grafton's wide-ranging investigation together. By the end of his book, we have come a long way from footnotes. Yet, upon closing this elegant and absorbing book, we would be remiss not to consider the fact that Grafton has equipped his work with substantial footnotes of his own. It took some courage to provide footnotes in a book about footnotes.

Grafton eschews the Gibbonian style in favor of helpful references and ample quotations, often in Latin or German. This gives a reassuring air of solid scholarship as well as membership in a select confraternity of erudite persons. The unwashed read the text, the learned check the footnotes. This, after all, is just what Grafton has taught us to expect. Grafton's footnotes, however, are short on polemic and long on accolades. These days reading footnotes in some scholarly works is rather like attending prize day at school. Grafton cites a book by his Princeton colleague Lawrence Stone with the words, "For a pioneering discussion of these points, see L. Stone...." Later on we find a useful note beginning, "For Petrarch and Kepler see the provocative and insightful analysis of...." Examples could be multiplied. They illustrate Grafton's generous spirit, and they call attention to the one use of footnotes that he conspicuously fails to discuss: praise instead of polemic. Grafton's own irenic practice is a model of decency. But if his footnotes are not so much fun as Gibbon's or Bayle's, his lively and searching text most assuredly is. For a pioneering discussion of these points, see A. Grafton....

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The Good Father

By Alan Taylor

George Washington: Writings edited by John Rhodehamel

(Library of America, 1,149 pp., $40)

To the degree that Americans pay any heed to their national origins, it has been a season of Jefferson. In a recent documentary, Ken Burns and George F. Will assured us that he was the preeminent and fundamental American of the Revolutionary generation. They promoted Jefferson into "the man of the millennium," primarily responsible for the global spread of democracy. And following Joseph Ellis's recent book, they characterized Jefferson as the "American Sphinx" whose riddles we must solve (or not solve) to know ourselves. In his human contradictions, in the collision of his expressions of principle and his moral evasions, Jefferson seems timely and accessible, our representative among the "Founding Fathers."

But it was George Washington who once seemed the supreme Founding Father, the man of the millennium. In the more confident and dutiful public culture of the nineteenth century, Americans revered Washington as their paragon of virtue and integrity, and as the symbol of their national union. In 1844, a biography written for young people insisted that "the first word of infancy should be mother, the second father, the third Washington." Later in the century, when a historical novelist crafted a Washington with a few human foibles, an outraged critic responded: "Why this is the very essence of falsehood. Washington was not like other men; and to bring his lofty character down to the level of the vulgar passions of common life, is to give the lie to the grandest chapter in the ... annals of the human race." No American sphinx, he.

Of course, such panegyrics leave us cold, rendering Washington alien to the twentieth-century sensibility precisely because he was so iconic to our predecessors, who believed in heroes on the grand scale. Some recent screenplays, novels, and revisionist histories have tried to update Washington by Jeffersonizing him with petty passions and moral hypocrisies; but these efforts lack conviction and plausibility. Consequently, our Washington continues to wither behind stone monuments or into trivia about wooden teeth.

Now the Library of America seeks to revive and rescue Washington by publishing a new edition of his writings. But this is one of the rare volumes in the Library of America whose simple format defeats its laudable purpose. Readers without an expertise in eighteenth-century American history will feel lost in a dense thicket of unexplained documents. There is no introduction and the notes are frustratingly terse (and they are banished to the back, far from each text). This austerity can work in the other Library of America volumes, dedicated to previously published and widely known works of literature; but most of Washington's "writings" consist of private correspondence, which was not intended for publication. The letters are replete with references and inferences understood by his friends but lost to us without some expert guidance. And most of the letters do not stand well on their own, without their other halves in the words of Washington's correspondents. Readers will feel frustrated, as they listen in on half of a cryptic conversation.

Yet the patient reader will find here the materials to begin to reconstruct Washington's remarkable story. With enormous pains and internal struggle, he developed a public persona dedicated to consolidating an imperial union and power in North America. Our national prowess and "imperial presi-

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dency" began in George Washington's expansive vision of his own and our potential. In the volume's first document, an adolescent Washington obsessively copied a detailed list of 110 rules of civility. "Let thy carriage be such as becomes a Man Grave, Settled, and attentive to that which is spoken." "Labour to keep alive in your Breast that Little Spark of Celestial Fire called Conscience." And over the subsequent half-century, Washington mastered himself into an almost perfect presentation of gravity, dignity and integrity, despite recurrent battles with despair at his own limitations and troubles. No American of his century created a greater public reputation or labored more to bear up under its accumulating weight.

As an ambitious young man, Washington linked his personal development and his growing reputation with his understanding of a larger destiny for the colonies. Far earlier and far more consistently than any other colonist, Washington came to think of himself as more than a Virginian. He defined himself as an American; and he imagined a national union on a continental scale, and with imperial potential. He understood that the diverse and mutually prejudiced Northern and Southern colonies could find a common fate in a shared expansion westward.

In the late 1740s, as a boyish land surveyor on the frontier, and later, in the 1750s, as a young army officer, Washington recognized that the key to American development lay in an unobstructed expansion westward beyond the Appalachians into the Ohio and Mississippi valleys. Entrusted with Virginia's defense of a long and vulnerable frontier against devastating French and Indian raids, Washington struggled with civilian panic, mutinous soldiers, inept subordinates, inadequate supplies, rampant desertion, and bickering colonies. In 1756, he insisted that "nothing I more sincerely wish than a union to the Colonys in this time of Eminent danger." Frustrated by colonial pettiness, Washington looked to British military aid and commanders to unite the colonists, and to rescue them. Early in his career, he hoped to pursue his own, and America's, greatness within, rather than against, the British empire.

In 1759-60, the British victory, with colonial assistance, in expelling the French from North America seemed to vindicate Washington's imperial vision. In subsequently taxing Americans to help fund the colossal war debt, however, Britain alienated most of the colonists. Retired to his Virginia plantation at Mount Vernon, Washington struggled to maintain a genteel style of life while encumbered by mounting debts owed to his mercantile creditors in London. Something seemed chronically wrong with the colonies' terms of trade within the empire. Economic frustration rendered the colonists sensitive to the constitutional innovations of their British overlords. In British taxation, Washington detected a new plot to hinder American development, to confine the colonies to their petty isolation from one another, and to seal off the trans-Appalachian west as a reserve for Indians. He saw a link between the "Invasion of our Rights & Priviledges by the Mother Country—& our lives and properties by the Savages." In the widespread colonial anger, Washington detected a new potential for an American union that could claim its western destiny by asserting independence from the British empire.

In the spring of 1775 war erupted, and a Continental Congress of delegates from the thirteen colonies assumed effective government in defiance of British rule. Washington's patriotic sentiments, his political weight as a leading Virginian (from the largest and wealthiest colony), his military experience, and his prodigious public dignity combined to secure his appointment, by the Continental Congress, to command their new army. "It was utterly out of my power to refuse this appointment without exposing my Character to such censures as would have reflected dishonour upon myself." Determined to construct an army that would embody a new sense of American nationalism, he announced, "They are now the Troops of the United Provinces of North America: and it is hoped that all Distinctions of Colonies will be laid aside." During the long hard war, Washington saw a dual prospect for America: liberation from British constraints and the construction of an imperial union. He extolled "this glorious revolution" both for "rescuing millions from the hand of oppression, and ... laying the foundation of a great Empire."

As commander, Washington repeatedly confronted a nearly fatal contradiction: a revolution in the name of liberty demanded extraordinary unity and sacrifice from a people who defined their liberty as the unlimited pursuit and enjoyment of individual opportunity. In taking command, he promised his countrymen and women "a firm belief of the justice of our Cause—close attention in the prosecution of it—and the strictest Integrety." Although he delivered on all three promises, most Americans sought to minimize their own sacrifices while pursuing every opportunity for private profit. He concluded, "for notwithstanding all the publick virtue which is ascribed to these people, there is no nation under the Sun (that I ever came across) [that] pay greater adoration to money than they do."

A bitterly divided and chronically weak Congress could procure little material support for the army from the fractious states and from a public that increasingly hoped that someone else would win the war for them. Despite occasional victories and impressive gains in discipline, the Continental Army remained undermanned, poorly fed, clad in rags, divided by state prejudices, and racked by officers' feuds over promotions. Amid the chaos, the greed, and the bungling, Washington found solace and hope in the persistent endurance by a saving remnant among the common soldiery: "To see Men without Cloathes to cover their nakedness, without Blankets to lay on, without Shoes, by which their Marches might be traced by the Blood from their feet, and almost as often without Provisions as with; Marching through frost and Snow ... and submitting to it without a murmur, is a mark of patience and obedience which in my opinion can scarce be parallel'd."

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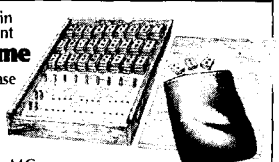

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He often blundered as a tactician, but he mastered the strategic and political essence of his command. Above all, he had to secure respect for himself and the cause by consistently presenting, in orders, letters, speech, and posture, a persona of utter dignity and self-assurance—no easy task given his ramshackle army, divided country, and powerful enemy. Washington exhorted his soldiers that "the Eyes of all our Countrymen are now upon us, and we shall have their blessings, and praises, if happily we are the instruments of saving them from the Tyranny meditated against them. Let us therefore animate and encourage each other, and shew the whole world, that a Freeman contending for Liberty on his own ground is superior to any slavish mercenary on earth."

But behind this bravado, he often felt trapped in a hopeless command that would destroy his cherished reputation. In September 1776, in the midst of defeat, he poured out his soul to a relative:

> In short, such is my situation that if I were to wish the bitterest curse to an enemy on this side of the grave, I should put him in my stead with my feelings: and yet I do not know what plan of conduct to pursue. I see the impossibility of serving with reputation, or doing any essential service to the cause by continuing in command, and yet I am told that if I quit the command, inevitable ruin will follow from the distraction that will ensue. In confidence I tell you that I never was in such an unhappy, divided state since I was born.

By keeping private his despair, he preserved, almost miraculously, an unruffled public demeanor that commanded the respect and sustained the hopes of his countrymen and women. Washington's greatest service and greatest sacrifice was to endure the psychological and emotional toll of this rigid detachment of his public resolve from his private agony. By almost sheer force of will, by an extraordinary mastery of appearances, he kept alive a suffering army that sustained the revolution until September 1781, when French military assistance secured the critical victory at Yorktown.

When the British sued for peace, Washington celebrated the victory of America's "steubendous fabrick of Freedom and Empire." But as British rule faded, American state politicians felt freer to ignore and virtually to dismantle their confederation government. Without a common enemy, most Americans were ready to abandon Washington's dream of consolidating a national union and a national identity. He worried that "I see one head gradually changing into thirteen." In 1783, Washington calmly cowed a potential military coup by disgruntled officers, peacefully demobilized the army, and retired to his civilian life as a Virginia planter.

Admiring his devotion to the republic, and relieved by his ready relinquishment of power, the public revered Washington as their greatest patriot. Yet he nearly became trapped by the monumental reputation that he had nurtured. During the 1780s, as fellow nationalists contended bitterly with the advocates of state autonomy, Washington wished to remain above the fray, immune from dispute, compromise, and criticism. Having built up enormous influence and popularity, he dreaded their expenditure, even for his preeminent cause of strengthening the union. Indeed, he dithered when chosen by the Virginia state legislature to serve as a delegate to the Federal Convention to meet in Philadelphia, in the spring of 1787, to frame a new constitution that would consolidate the nation. Expressing a slavish concern for appearances and reputation, he advanced a ludicrous excuse: he could not attend because he had already declined an invitation to preside over a meeting there of the Society of the Cincinnati, a controversial organization of retired army officers. He feared "the disrespect it might seem to offer to that Society, to be there on another occasion."

He begged his correspondents to reveal "what the public expectation is on this head—that is whether I will, or ought to be there?" Fortunately for the fledgling nation, Washington's fellow delegates refused to take no for an answer. Fortunately for Washington, he immediately became the convention's chair, and so was elevated above entanglement in the debates. Ratification of the new Constitution from 1787 to 1788 brought the inevitable expectation that Washington must become the first president of the new federal government. Unanimously elected, he accepted, but grimly insisted "that my movements to the chair of Government will be accompanied with feelings not unlike those of a culprit who is going to the place of his execution."

To modern, politically cynical eyes, such protestations seem hollow and self-serving. Yet Washington had good reason to dread his new position as the focus of public attention and as the font of precedents for the new government. He knew that only domestic seclusion could preserve his most difficult and fond accomplishment: his almost universal reputation as the disinterested patriot of perfect integrity. Inevitably, political strife would erode popular awe.

As the first president over the empire of liberty, Washington created and mastered an almost impossible role that has consumed most of his successors: somehow to appear always, perfectly, and simultaneously imperial and democratic. He worried obsessively about how best "to maintain the dignity of Office, without subjecting himself to the imputation of superciliousness or unnecessary reserve." Should he attend tea parties? How often would he hold state dinners? How many congressmen could he invite on a given occasion "without exciting clamours in the rest of the community"? He sought a perfect balance that would "support propriety of character without partaking of the follies of luxury and ostentation."

As in the war, more was at stake than his personal vanity, for he knew that his performance in the new role of the imperial, democratic president would build a popular reverence for the new national government. And he regarded the union's survival as essential to "the preservation of the sacred fire of liberty, and the destiny of the Republican model of Government." During his eight-year presidency, the United States secured its western frontiers, funded an immense war debt, established a national capital in the new District of Columbia, and enjoyed an unprecedented surge in economic and demographic growth. In 1795, he asked Congress, "Is it too much to say, that our country exhibits a spectacle of national happiness never surpassed if ever before equalled?" If peace with prosperity is the measure of presidential administrations, Washington's was the most successful administration in our nation's history.

Still, Washington felt that his accomplishments were obscured and imperiled as federal politics became shrill and partisan. He despaired that Congress behaved "with a warmth & intemperence; with prolixity & threats; which it is to be feared has lessened the dignity of that body, & decreased that respect which was once entertained for it." The partisan rancor seeped into, and intensified within, the newspapers, much to Washington's dismay and outrage. "I have brought on myself a torrent of abuse in the factious papers in this country, and from the enmity of the discontented of all descriptions." Worse still, the partisanship divided his own cabinet, as Thomas Jefferson, the more democratic Secretary of State, confronted Alexander Hamilton, the more elitist Secretary of the Treasury.

In vain, Washington cautioned both

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men to show "more charity for the opinions and acts of one another." As France and Britain resumed warfare, the two eighteenth-century superpowers pressured the weaker United States to choose a side. Solicitous of trade, Hamilton favored Britain. Optimistic about the French Revolution, Jefferson tilted toward France. Washington successfully struggled to keep the country united and neutral, but he alienated Jefferson, who assumed leadership of the opposition party in Congress, the states, and the newspapers.

Weary of the conflict, Washington retired in the spring of 1797, returning to Mount Vernon to improve his long-neglected plantation. In retirement, he took pride in inspecting the progress of the construction of the new national capital nearby on the Potomac River. But he also remained attentive to, and anxious about, the fate of the republic under the stewardship of John Adams, his overmatched successor and fellow Federalist. Washington expressed growing outrage at the Jeffersonians for distorting every Federalist measure into an alleged plot "to introduce monarchy." He charged the Jeffersonians with "poisoning the minds of our people and to sow dissentions among them, in order to alienate their affections from the Government of their Choice, thereby endeavoring to dissolve the Union." In particular, he denounced the readiness of Jefferson and other Southern opponents to champion states' rights, threatening nullification to defy national measures. On December 14, 1799, Washington died, and so was spared the mortification of witnessing Jefferson's election to the presidency in early 1801.

Perhaps Washington's greatest accomplishment came with the execution of his Last Will and Testament, which stipulated that all of his slaves would become free upon the demise of his widow. He also required his heirs "comfortably" to clothe and to feed the elderly blacks and to provide for the education of the young. Like so many of the Founding Fathers, Washington had championed liberty while holding blacks in plantation slavery. But Washington exceeded most of his contemporaries, notably Jefferson, in developing a fundamental respect for the humanity of his slaves and a growing disgust with the system of slavery.

Early in this volume, during the 1760s, Washington appears as a conventional planter. Without moral qualms, he advertises a reward for runaways and seeks to exchange an especially troublesome slave for a consignment of molasses, rum, limes, tamarinds, and sweetmeats. But participation in the revolution taught Washington a new sensitivity to the plights and the rights of the enslaved. During the crisis with Britain, patriot leaders hyperbolically charged the British with a plot to enslave the colonists. Although Washington subscribed to this rhetoric, his own formulation recognized Americans' own tyranny. He feared that continued British rule would render the colonists "as tame & abject Slaves, as the Blacks we Rule over with such arbitrary Sway."

More than most planters, Washington took great pains to provide generous clothing, housing, and provisions for his slaves. And, beginning in the early 1780s, he would neither sell his slaves nor buy new ones. Since he owned more slaves than he could profitably employ, Washington endured during the 1790s a prolonged financial drain as a consequence of his principled determination to avoid selling slaves "as you would do cattle in the market." To keep his plantation afloat, and to keep intact his slave families and community, Washington had to raise funds by selling off most of the Ohio Valley lands that he had painstakingly acquired at the Indians' expense during the 1760s. Such were the paradoxes of race, property, and conscience in eighteenth-century America.

Unlike Jefferson, who freely speculated about black racial inferiority, Washington's writings display no need to denigrate black ability. On the contrary, compared to most of his contemporaries, Washington readily recognized and applauded the talents among the enslaved. In early 1776, he received a poem from a young woman and, "with a view of doing justice to her great poetical Genius, I had a great Mind to publish the Poem." In gratitude for her gift, he invited her to visit his headquarters in Cambridge. The poet was the now famous Phillis Wheatley, who was then an enslaved Bostonian. In writing of and to her, Washington made no reference to her race: a remarkable omission by the standards of his day (and of our own).

In private correspondence during the 1780s and 1790s, Washington repeatedly expressed a devout hope that the state governments would legislate "a gradual Abolition of Slavery; It would prevent much future Mischief." Like Jefferson, though, Washington was unwilling to expend his formidable political capital openly to lead so controversial a cause in Virginia. Nor did Washington advance the cause of abolition in national politics. He detested the interstate and international slave trade, but he supported Southern Congressmen who rejected the petitions by Quakers to terminate both immediately. Like dozens of other prominent Virginians with misgivings about slavery, Washington preferred to avoid political confrontation and to confine emancipation to his own slaves and to the moment of his own death. From our vantage in time, Washington's actions may seem paternalistic and painfully limited; but by the standards of eighteenth-century Virginians, he was remarkable for his willingness to subordinate racism and self-interest to a recognition of common humanity.

Recovering our historical memory of George Washington would do our public culture a world of good at this time of reduced and traduced expectations. The lofty Jefferson serves to remind us of the moral contradictions and racial injustice manifest in our republic, from its origins. But it is the loftier Washington who exemplifies the possibility that individuals can grow into a sense of their own responsibilities to promote racial justice. And a memory of his sacrifices to achieve our national union might give pause to those eager to hasten the withering of a national sense of purpose.

ALAN TAYLOR is Professor of History at the University of California at Davis and the author of *William Cooper's Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic* (Knopf).

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

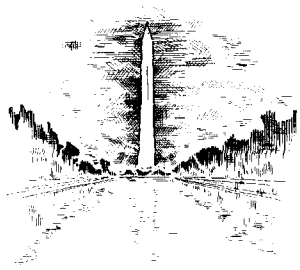
State of nature

RECENTLY, SEVERAL FRIENDS AND I read *Into the Wild*, Jon Krakauer's short book (expanding a riveting cover story in *Outside* magazine) about the disappearance of a young man from an affluent Washington suburb. Two years later, the man was found dead in the Alaska tundra, having changed his name to Alexander Supertramp. The author, using Alex's journal, retraced the twentysomething's wanderings from Mexico to near the Arctic Circle. For much of the journey, Alex refused money and food offered by strangers, insisting he wanted to survive on what nature provided—wild berries and small game. My friends admired the pure way Alex lived out his wanderlust and desire to be in nature. "Briefly he lived my fantasy," says an investment banker friend of mine. "I dream of leaving New York and living among the caribou. Just me and nature forever."

NOW, WEALTHY MODERN-DAY Thoreaus can do just that. For about $25,000 a year, a New York company called HDT will dump you in some far-off wilderness and keep "completely unobtrusive" watch to make sure you don't get too injured. HDT accepts only those who intend to live in the wild for the rest of their lives, and the company requires a hefty 15-year deposit (about $370,000 per customer), since there is no way to collect once you're in the wild. Of course, discounts are available if you're willing to tolerate more physical harm. If, for instance, you waive rescues for broken limbs, the cost drops in half. More than 80 percent of HDT's clients have to be rescued within a year.

MY FIRST TRY AT ANYTHING LIKE living in the wild, which took place when I was about seven years old, was a little more affordable. My parents took my brother and me to an old quarry that advertised itself as a fishing hole. It was free of charge unless you caught something, in which case you were assessed a stiff per-fish fee. But how many could a kid really hook? Well, lots, it turns out, because the quarry owner over-stocked the small pool with trout, making sure no vegetation grew on the rock floor, so the water was teeming with starving fish anxious for any morsel of nourishment. He then gave us poles and cheese, instead of worms, as bait. I attached some Swiss and dropped my line, and within seconds I had my first trout. I did it once more. Again, up came a trout. I became a fishing machine. Cheese. Drop. Catch! My family still has a photo of me somewhere, the expert angler, posing with my haul of scrawny eight-inchers.

SO, AT AGE SEVEN, I WAS SURE I could run away and live in the wild, fishing to survive. Years later, at overnight camp, I learned otherwise. We were expected to hike and pitch tents for a three-day weekend with minimal rations. None of us had done much camping. Who knew that the word "ration" actually meant we needed to portion our meals? After the first dinner, we were out of food except for a chunk of cheese. Confident in my fishing ability, I dipped that last morsel of cheddar into the lake and waited. Nothing happened. I dipped and dipped and, still, nothing. (Years later I found out the quarry mentor had lied—most fish can't digest milk products. They were just really hungry trout.) On day two my bunkmate found a tiny cabin and used the telephone to call for the camp director to rescue us.



IT TURNS OUT THAT MANY OF THE most devoted and most successful wildgoers are evangelical Christians fulfilling what they say is man's original, and therefore most devout, state. Some evangelicals claim to have lived in the wild for a decade or more. A few of the best have formed an organization called Back to Eden to try to de-industrialize America and bring everyone into the wild with them. According to their newsletter, *Naked Truth*, Back to Eden plans to "use any means necessary as long as it is non-polluting and natural to close the nation's factories." Slingshots? Industrialists, though, don't have much to worry about: Back to Eden's supporters only sporadically emerge from the woods.

LATELY, BACK TO EDEN HAS SPENT more time fighting itself. The group has split into two factions: those who think God intends for us to live naked in the wild, and those who say God intends for us to be clothed. Jeremy Sheirt, the somewhat militant leader of the naked evangelicals, insists the Bible is on his side. (Isaiah 20:2 says, "Go loose the sack cloth from your loins and take off your shoes from your feet.") He says that he is building up forces and will try to "nudify" America to "bring us all in God's full view." In a rare telephone interview, Sheirt told me last year that he and his "naked warriors" would soon rip the clothes off "important people" on live television, "setting off a chain reaction of happiness and holiness and returning us to the pure state." A reporter from *Forest Trail and Hike* magazine, who visited Sheirt several years ago, says the spiritualist ripped his clothes open with a knife after telling him that we all have succumbed to industrialization. Garry Jedef, Back to Eden's president and the leader of the clothed evangelicals, does not dismiss Sheirt's claims as trivial; rather, he says there are more Bible passages on his side. And, he says, "We have direct evidence—God would not have made burrs and pine needles if he intended for us to be nude." The two sides seem far from reconciliation since Sheirt won't meet with anyone clothed and Jedef won't meet with anyone naked.

WHILE I REFUSE TO commit to either theology, I have become blindly devoted to at least one staple of camping: beef jerky. Over the past few years, I have become a connoisseur of dried strips of peppered meat. You could say this has been my way of living—albeit briefly—in the wild. Every once in a while, my girlfriend and I spend a weekend driving through the West Virginia hills searching for the perfect jerky. We stop at mom-and-pop stores and talk to the clerks about the ancient art of drying meat.

LATE ONE NIGHT, HOWEVER, WE saw an infomercial advertising the Ronco Food Dehydrator and Beef Jerky Machine. On the commercial were dozens of people just like me. I ordered one immediately. Overwhelmed by the idea of having a fully operational jerky factory in my own kitchen running 24 hours a day, I spent an extra $40 on additional trays so I could make seven types of jerky simultaneously! Economies of scale, I told my girlfriend: the more jerky we make, the cheaper it is per serving. I dreamed of selling my own brand of jerky and making millions. After a wait of several weeks, the food dehydrator arrived. The next morning we went to a local gourmet grocery store and bought prime meat to inaugurate the sleek machine. We fired it up, and within moments the apartment was filled with the reek of decomposing beef. Next door, the dogs howled, just like wolves closing in on an undefended campsite. Rescue came in the form of a deodorizer can: natural pine-scent, of course.

STEPHEN GLASS

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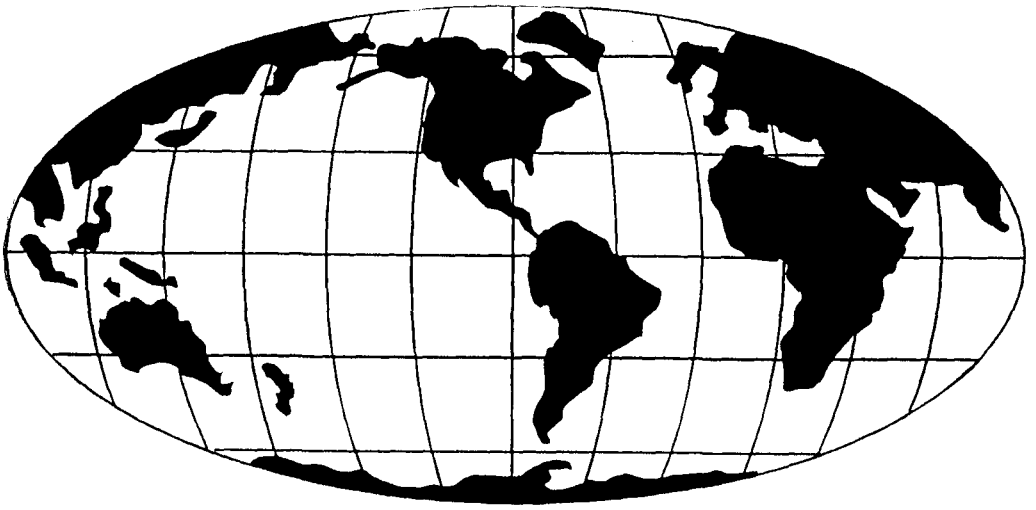

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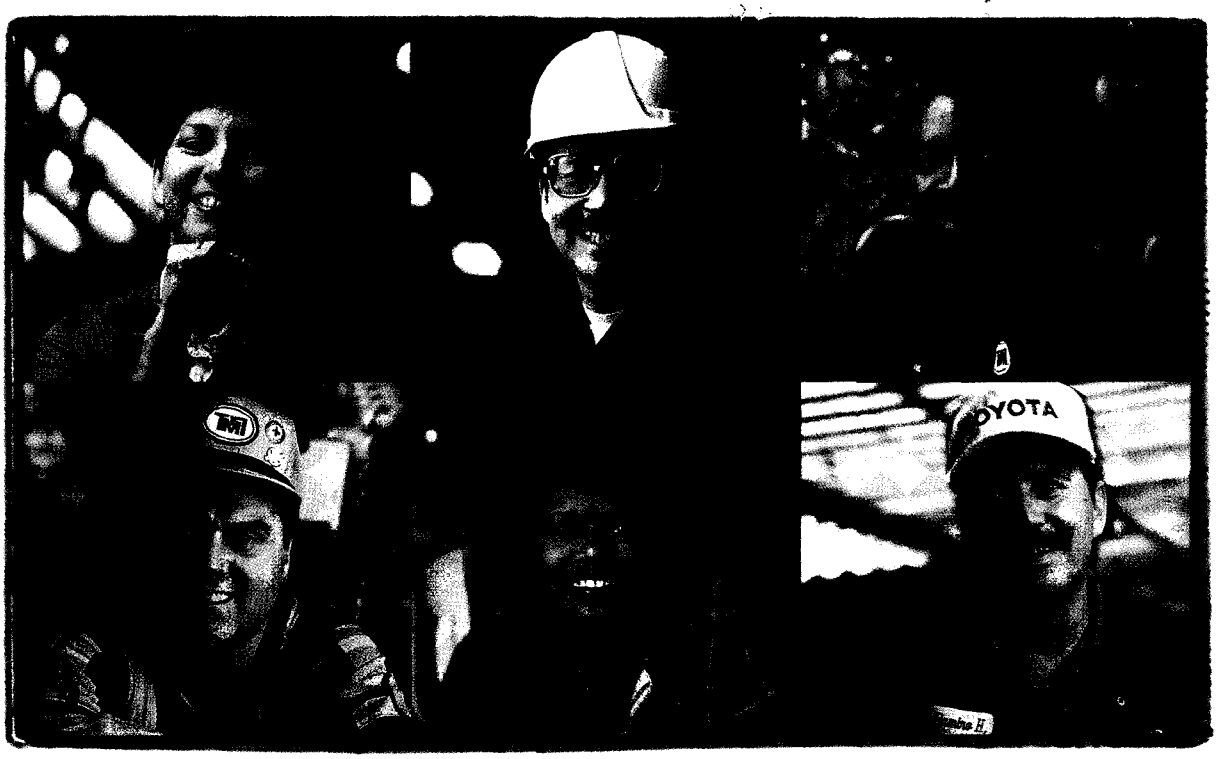

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